



MEMO

TO: File

FROM: Daniel G. Hilson

DATE: February 27, 2019

RE: First Ring School Districts Legislative Strategy Activities

A group of superintendents attended a dinner meeting with me on February 20th with Representative Cupp and Senator Lehner to discuss school issues and, in particular, changes necessary to the current ADC program. At the dinner meeting, Rep. Cupp identified three reforms that he believed were necessary:

1. Revise the type of data that is collected for the school report cards;
2. Reform the current ADC statutory and regulatory requirements; and,
3. Provide for some type of recognition when a school district undertakes all of the suggested reforms by ODE and still does not achieve improved academic performance.

Sen. Lehner identified leadership (essentially the Superintendent and the Superintendent's administrative staff) as the key to improving academic performance.

1. In addition to those issues, we also learned from the two legislators that the legislature is willing and ready to change the current ADC structure now that Governor Kasich is no longer threatening to veto the changes.
2. After reviewing newspaper articles and conversations with Governor DeWine's staff, it appears that Governor DeWine is also willing to look at possible recommended changes to the ADC program.
3. The legislators believe that some of the information and data obtained and reported on the report cards might be capturing inappropriate or meaningless data while missing other important data all necessary to help school districts improve academic performance.
4. Sen. Lehner encouraged consideration and support for an additional pool of funds that would be available for struggling schools to utilize in an effort to achieve academic performance. She thought the pool of funds needed to be distributed based upon some rather objective criteria and removed from political wrangling.

5. She thought that the ADC is too restrictive and needed some additional off-and-on ramps during the course of traveling toward ADC status.
6. Both legislators identified Steubenville City Schools as a district that has high poverty, but has rather high student performance and wondered whether there is information to obtain from that situation that can then translate to assist other schools.

We then had a presentation by Bob Sommers with CF Education Solutions where he identified a somewhat simplistic approach to assisting schools achieve improved academic performance. Those steps are outlined in a PowerPoint. The additional information obtained during a discussion identified:

1. The need to improve data intake so as not to give up specific scoring points on the school report cards through data intake and output error;
2. That there is a downward correlation with schools that focus on preparing for and teaching kids to take the proficiency exams, and student performance. Whereas, when a school focuses on learning techniques, the performance of the students improve;
3. A school that promotes the concept of student responsibility for his/her own learning habits generally leads to improved performance.

Tools vs. Performance Measures

We discussed the difference between tools that schools can use to increase academic performance and measurements that ODE uses to determine academic performance. As a collaborative, we are attempting to identify two or three tools and two or three measurements that need to be modified in the biennial budget.

Potential Candidates for Modification

1. The current ADC structure waits until a school has three successive failing years before there is impact and the impact is abrupt and immediate. We are suggesting that once a school receives a first failing grade for academic performance, ODE should assign a leadership liaison to collaborate with the superintendent on identifying and correcting administrative deficiencies, curricula deficiencies, teaching deficiencies, and other discernable modifications that will help improve academic performance.
2. Additionally, the superintendent and ODE leadership liaison should have monthly meetings with the school board president, teacher's union president, and the administrative colleague advisory panel member to identify corrective measures that need to be taken.

3. Those schools with a D in academic performance need to join a network of similarly situated schools and develop a colleague advisory panel that helps to identify areas for improvement.
4. ODE needs to modify the impact mobility has upon a school's report card. For example, many students are in foster care, jail, court placement, shared custody arrangements, or homeless. These factors will impact a school's academic performance measures that skew the results.
5. There is currently no discernable difference between a wealthy school district and a poor district in connection with its report card measurements. There needs to be some consideration for a weighting or other attempt to identify high-poverty districts.
6. Similarly, there needs to be some level of weighting for the percentage of gifted students and students with learning disabilities. The state could institute a cap that would reduce the temptation to misallocate the number of students that are gifted or have a learning disability in an attempt to skew the measurement results.

Our next step is for the First Ring Superintendents to identify specific parts of the ADC program and the various statutory requirements to ascertain any additional criteria that should be translated into actionable legislative or regulatory changes. That information needs to be collated and agreed upon by March 15th, which is the anticipated date the biennial budget will be introduced.

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