

Academic Distress Commission Alternative Plan

DRAFT-Not for Distribution

A district which receives an overall letter grade of F on the state report card for three consecutive years is subject to a state takeover by the Academic Distress Commission (RC 3302.10). The ADC has faced considerable community opposition in the three communities where it has gone into effect (Youngstown, Lorain and East Cleveland), resulting in numerous court challenges and implementation delays. While it may be too early to adequately evaluate the effectiveness of the ADC, the early evidence is discouraging and the local turmoil it has created remains disruptive. That is, while the intentions of the legislation may have been appropriate, the implementation of HB 70 has fallen far short of what is needed if Ohio's most distressed schools are to be transformed.

Currently a district which receives three straight Fs is automatically subject to state takeover and the one-size fits all solutions laid out in HB 70. There are no implementation variations accommodated through the HB 70 ADC process. Even those districts with a strong desire (and perhaps even a defined plan) to improve recognize that they probably cannot be successful in the year or two they have left before the ADC takes over. As a result, instead of seeking long-term improvements they pour their efforts into achieving goals that will reset the ADC clock. The attention to short-term quick fixes as opposed to systemic changes that transform educational practices is not in the best interests of the students who currently attend Ohio's designated failing schools.

Even if the state was getting terrific results out of the ADC, Ohio doesn't have the resources or the personnel to enact ADCs in all of the poorly performing districts. **Without eliminating the ADC, the state legislature needs to amend the law to allow other turnaround models to be employed in Ohio.** There are a number of organizations around the country with proven track records for improving school and student performance and, where appropriate, districts in Ohio that need to engage in turnaround work should be able to work with these educational service providers. State funding for turnaround work should not be limited to the ADC model.

The following proposal is intended to create some alternatives to an ADC takeover that might earn more community buy in while utilizing turnaround strategies with proven track records.

We are proposing the creation of a new entity entitled the School Improvement Review Committee (SIRC).

DUTIES

The purpose of the SIRC is two-fold:

- 1) The SIRC provides an avenue for a poor performing school district to substitute a locally designed school turnaround or transformational plan for the state mandated Academic Distress Commission, as outlined in RC 3302.10. The SIRC will work with the district to revise elements of

the transformation plan as well as develop both short-term and long-term metrics by which the plan will be evaluated. The SIRC and the district shall also agree on an implementation timeline, which will not exceed three years.

- 2) The SIRC may also consider a request from a school district that is already under control of an ADC to make some revisions to the ADC or to request a new transformation plan that makes it subject to SIRC review procedures. After a review of the request the SIRC will make a recommendation to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction relative to the school district's ADC status. NOTE: Any action taken by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in response to a recommendation of the SIRC will not require legislative approval.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It is proposed that the Governor appoint four members to the School Improvement Review Committee and the State Superintendent shall appoint three. Only five members will participate on the panel for a given district. This will help assure a full panel while avoiding any conflicts of interests. Members will serve a renewable three year term, and will be reimbursed for any expenses incurred. Members should be community leaders with some background in education, education policy and /or business development or transformation.

ALTERNATIVE PLAN

An alternative transformation plan that is submitted by a school district must include evidence-based turnaround strategies. It shall include both short-term and long-term metrics that can be used to assess academic progress and continuous improvement. It must identify existing personnel who will be responsible for carrying out the plan and their qualifications for serving in leadership roles. It shall also include plans to attract and retain high quality staff as needed. The proposal shall also contain estimates of the cost to implement the plan and identify any local partners expected to assist with the cost of implementation. The application must include a signed letter of support from the superintendent, a majority of the district school board members, and teacher union leaders.

A locally developed transformation plan may include the retention of a nationally recognized school turnaround consultant or company with at least a 75% demonstrated success rate in terms of improving school and student outcomes.

FUNDING

The state budget must include a line item for school turnaround initiative. The SIRC should consider the availability and use of state and local funds when approving a plan. The SIRC shall review any turnaround proposal submitted by a district and approve, deny or amend the proposal as well as making a recommendation for the allocation of funds.

DISTRICT ELIGIBILITY

Any district receiving an overall letter grade of an F for **two or more consecutive years** is eligible to submit an ADC alternative transformation plan. Based on the decision of the SIRC, the school district may also receive state funding and assistance to implement that plan.

If a district is operating under an approved SIRC plan it shall be considered under "safe harbor" from the ADC three-year clock (i.e., the ADC clock stops running) If the SIRC deems that the school district is not making a good faith effort to implement the agreed upon plan, the district's eligibility for the ADC will pick up where it had stopped.

The ADC remains as the default solution for a chronically underperforming district. The state takeover option (ADC) would be utilized only when a district fails to gain approval for an alternative district turnaround plan or fails to effectively implement an agreed upon transformation plan.