Ohio | Department of Education

John R. Kasich, Governor
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON K-12 EDUCATION AND FY18-19 BIENNIAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ohio Department of Education
February 7, 2017

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today on Ohio's K-12 education system, and the executive budget recommendations for the Ohio Department of Education. My name is Paolo DeMaria, and I am the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

I want to start by saying, "Thank you!" Thank you for your support of education in Ohio. This committee and the General Assembly have recognized the critical role that education plays in creating hope and a bright future for our children, our communities, and our state. Your past generosity is significant and very much appreciated.

I also want to thank Governor Kasich and Budget Director Keen for their long-standing support. In the last three budgets, education has been a high priority for the Administration. In this proposal for the FY18-19 biennium, despite a difficult revenue picture, the Administration has once again made education a priority and affirmed the importance of providing quality education services for Ohio's school children – and for that, we are very grateful. In this budget, no other state government function receives more additional General Revenue Fund dollars than education.

Since my appointment as State Superintendent seven months ago, I have had many opportunities to engage parents, educators and stakeholders across the state. I have visited schools, connected with teachers, and seen students who are actively engaged in learning. These opportunities have given me a personal look at the ways our schools and districts are working to ensure that every child in our state receives an education that prepares them to be successful after they walk across the graduation stage. I find that educators are open about their challenges, and often willing to suggest ways that the state can be supportive of their work. I always try to be mindful of that feedback as we work to shape education policy and support quality education practices.

EDUCATION SYSTEM AND BUDGET OVERVIEW

Before I launch into the specifics about Ohio's education accomplishments and essential programs, I would like to give a brief overview of the state's education system and the executive budget funding recommendations.

The Department oversees an education system consisting of 612 public school districts, 49 joint vocational school districts, 52 Educational Service Centers (ESCs), and 362 community schools. Ohio also enjoys a strong private (chartered non-public) school sector. There are over 4,000 school buildings in the state, of which 35 are designated as STEM schools. Ohio's public schools enroll approximately 1.7 million students served by over 100,000 licensed teachers and over 300,000 credentialed education personnel, including teachers, principals, administrators, aides, counselors, coaches, and other staff.

It takes more than $22 billion in federal, state, and local funding annually to operate Ohio's K-12 system. Governor Kasich's proposed budget recommends GRF funding of $8.1 billion (1.8% increase) in FY18 and $8.2 billion (1.7% increase) in FY19 for primary and secondary education. When all budget funds are combined, recommended support for primary and secondary education in the executive proposal totals $11.2 billion in FY18 and $11.4 billion in FY19 (increases of 1.2% and 1.4% respectively). These totals do not include Property Tax Replacement/Tangible Personal Property Reimbursements and Property Tax Reimbursements, which reflect an additional $1.4 billion each year. It is important to point out that most of these funds – 98% – flow to schools and districts as subsidy payments, with only 2% remaining – roughly $227 million – for the Department's agency operations. Many of our operating dollars also directly or indirectly support the work of schools and districts.

The foundation formula provides the primary source of state financial support for educational services to students. The budget recommends $7.93 billion in FY18 and $8.05 billion in FY19. As represented by Director Keen in his testimony, the various components of the formula would not change, with one exception. The minimum state share of district transportation costs would be reduced from 50% in the current year to 37.5% in FY18 and to 25% in FY19 to better direct limited state funds to districts with the greatest need for state support to fund this essential service.

Transitional aid, commonly referred to as the "guarantee," would remain in place to ensure stability in state funding for districts from year to year, except for certain districts that have experienced declining student enrollment in excess of 5% over the last five years. For those districts, the guarantee would adjust commensurate with the enrollment decline in excess of 5%. No district would receive less than 95% of their prior year funding.

While these amounts, figures, and growth rates are important, how the dollars support programs and activities that influence the education and success of Ohio's children is just as crucial. I am excited to highlight for you the key areas that are driving our education system to excellence.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

High-quality early childhood educational experiences make a tremendous difference for our youngest learners. According to Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, children with disabilities and children who live in poverty arrive at school underprepared in language, literacy, and math skills. The budget recommendations continue to prioritize investments in quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children to support their growth and development.

Over the last four years, funding for early childhood programming has tripled, now offering more than 18,000 seats for disadvantaged children. Thanks to the commitment from Governor Kasich, legislators, teachers, and advocates, Ohio has a cross-agency Early Learning and Development System that is working to align services and improve the quality of early childhood education. Our efforts in this regard include:

- Addressing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of young children through Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards;
- Emphasizing the importance of parents and families in their children's development;
- Removing duplicative practices through cross-agency partnerships by replacing them with the Step Up to Quality rating system; and
- Using technology and infrastructure improvements that support cross-agency alignment, customer access, and increased efficiencies.

This budget continues to support these efforts with over $195 million each year for early learning and development programming. More specifically, the budget recommends $70 million each year to fund early childhood education slots for children who live in poverty and $110 million each year to fund pre-school special education services. While the Department administers these programs, additional appropriations recommended for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) round out Ohio's commitment to quality early learning opportunities. We support the appropriations recommended for ODJFS for these services, as they are critical to helping Ohio's youngest students start their learning journey ready to succeed.

As part of our continuing efforts to improve access to and the quality of early learning opportunities, the executive budget recommends permissive authority for the Department to create a Parent Choice Pilot Project (ALI 200408). In a pilot community, low-income parents would have the ability to choose a high-quality early childhood education program that best suits their child's needs. Such a pilot will give parents options, and the Department will have the opportunity to better understand the impact of choice on increasing access to high-quality preschool. We are committed to working with the Departments of Job and Family Services, Developmental Disabilities, Health, and Mental Health and Addiction Services, as well as local entities, to pilot a comprehensive and accommodating system.

With these policies in place, more of Ohio's youngest children will be educated, healthy, and thriving. They will have high-quality learning experiences and the necessary supports to be ready for kindergarten and a lifetime of learning.

CAREER AND POST-SECONDARY READINESS

Once a student enters kindergarten, our goal is to nurture in them a love for learning and prepare them for success in life, careers, and future learning. We are committed to ensuring Ohio's education system is structured so that students graduate from high school ready to succeed in careers, college, and other post-secondary learning after high school.

Standards, Assessments, Accountability and the Ohio's Every Student Succeeds Draft Plan

The foundational pillars that support this goal are our standards, assessments, and accountability. Standards define what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level; assessments measure whether we are being successful in helping students reach the standards that have been set; and our accountability system measures various aspects of the performance of our education system at the building, district, and state levels.

Our recently released draft plan for compliance with the federal **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** takes advantage of the opportunity given to us by the federal government to re-examine and improve on these foundational components. Ohio has traditionally been a leader in developing these systems and we already have a solid framework in place. Our draft plan, released last week, was the result of 15 months of consultation and collaboration through regional meetings, webinars, surveys, and stakeholder gatherings. Overall more than 15,000 Ohioans have provided input so far. Key features of our plan include the following:

- *Standards:* Ohio's current work to strengthen and clarify our English language arts and mathematics standards, and future work on strengthening science and social studies standards demonstrate compliance with the federal requirement to have standards that align with college and career ready expectations. This work includes consideration by review committees created by the legislature, as well as a number of content-specific advisory and review committees comprised of Ohio parents, teachers and subject matter experts.
- *Assessments:* Ohio's current system complies with federal requirements for testing in English language arts, mathematics and science. Stakeholders have asked for much needed stability in the assessment

arena – stability that we agree is necessary. However, we also heard many comments about the need to continue to focus on reducing the number of tests. For this reason, we are committed to an on-going, inclusive process to identify specifically where Ohio can streamline its assessments and make meaningful modifications. Changes to required assessments would require legislative changes.

- *Accountability:* Ohio's draft plan sets ambitious, but achievable, statewide goals for the next decade: to raise proficiency rates in core subjects, increase graduation rates, and reduce chronic absenteeism (which we propose to add as a new non-academic measure). The plan contemplates improvements to various components of the report card including the K-3 Literacy component, the Gap Closing component, and the Prepared for Success component. Additionally, we will work to help make report cards more user-friendly for parents, and more clearly define the meaning of the A-F grade levels.

We are committed to working with Governor Kasich, members of the General Assembly and stakeholders as we finalize Ohio's draft ESSA plan and identify any potential legislative changes. The public comment period on the ESSA plan runs through March 6. The input received will be used to revise the plan before it is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in April.

Career-Based Learning Strategies

Beyond those areas contained in Ohio's ESSA plan, perhaps the most exciting change happening in education is the work we are doing to connect students to careers. Career-based learning is a win-win. Students win because career-based learning means students are more engaged and therefore, more likely to reach the learning outcomes we have identified as key to their future success. Businesses also win because more individuals are aware of the great jobs we have here in Ohio and emerge ready to contribute to our economy.

We owe Governor Kasich a great debt of gratitude for progress in this area. Starting with his creation of the Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT), he has prioritized career readiness. When he announced the Career Connections initiative he said, "Getting kids excited about what the job opportunities are; to tell them about what they pay, and what it takes to get there, when presented in an exciting way, can begin to capture their imagination." Out of this vision, we see teachers linking classroom learning to careers using resources developed as part of Career Connections. We see school districts like Marion City, Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and many others systematically transforming complete buildings to focus on career clusters. Students now have opportunities that they never had before through satellite programs and career-centric instructional models. We have a strong career-technical infrastructure, and are seeing an ever-growing interest in enhanced career learning.

We have accomplished so much in the past few years to support this important educational trend. The Department has mapped new career pathways, outlining ways for students to achieve career goals and build on their opportunities in high school. We have worked with OWT to survey employers around Ohio and identify in-demand jobs. We have used that list to support and develop programs that prepare students for these jobs and created resources that support career exploration in the classroom. Our work with our partners in higher education on articulation agreements for career-technical education (CTE) programs assures college credit for our students. We are finding more and more examples of businesses directly involved with schools to promote careers and to provide quality career-technical and work-based learning opportunities, including internships and apprenticeships.

Perhaps most importantly of all, one of the new pathways to high school graduation focuses on earning an in-demand credential. We are signaling to all students, parents, and our communities at-large that career-based learning is a rigorous and valuable avenue to a student's future success.

In furtherance of the growing interest in career-connected education, we are proud to have recently received a $2 million New Skills for Youth grant (ALI 200615). Working with OWT, the Department will focus on strengthening and expanding career-based opportunities for students across the state.

The previous budget included over $2 million for a career-counseling pilot program designed to promote awareness of and preparation for Ohio's in-demand careers. At selected pilot sites, educators collaborated with local business and industry partners, better preparing students to make decisions about career and college options. With new funds set aside in this budget for Career Connections (ALI 200545), the Department plans to build on the lessons learned from this pilot and bring stronger career counseling to students across Ohio.

The biggest obstacle that remains is a cultural one – the perception that, somehow, a career-technical program is not as rigorous as a college-focused one. Nothing could be further from the truth. Focusing on career preparation does not mean closing the door to a college education. Students graduating from CTE programs have a very high success rate in college because they receive high-quality academic preparation in addition to their career training. We are committed to improving the understanding among parents and students that a career-technical education creates as many opportunities as a college-preparatory pathway. For many students, the engaging, impactful learning experience of a CTE program is the best preparation for their future.

Giving Students a Jump Start on Higher Education

Another way we prepare students for careers and college is through College Credit Plus (CCP). CCP is an opportunity for students in Ohio to earn college and high school credits at the same time. Last year, more than 52,000 Ohio students saved over $120 million in tuition costs. These results are remarkable and I am excited for what the second year will show.

In response to feedback from both K-12 and higher education stakeholders, the Departments of Education and Higher Education held interested party meetings to evaluate the first year of the program. The budget will include a number of programmatic changes designed to address a variety of concerns.

- *Textbooks:* The cost to high schools for textbooks will be limited to $10 per credit hour, or to a cost and distribution arrangement negotiated with the college.
- *Student Eligibility:* CCP participation would be limited to students who demonstrate college preparedness, such as scoring remediation-free on a college entrance exam.
- *Course Eligibility:* There will be some restrictions, established by rule, on the courses eligible for CCP funding
- *Continuing Student Participation:* Students who underperform in CCP will need to meet certain requirements in order to continue participation
- *Funding Floor & Ceiling:* The budget eliminates the ability for higher education institutions to negotiate per credit hour funding below the established floor.

Chancellor Carey and I remain open and committed to making improvements to College Credit Plus that prioritize the needs of students. We are encouraged to see so many secondary and post-secondary partners working together to focus on the educational advancement of students and expect to see much more going forward.

Closing Ohio's Diploma Gap

While we are strengthening the career and college readiness of students, we still face the reality that one million adults in Ohio do not have a high school diploma. As we look to develop a stronger workforce, it is imperative to

find innovative ways to close this diploma gap. That is why the Department, with vision and support from Governor Kasich and OWT, has been dedicated to expanding adult education options. We currently serve this population through three distinct programs, each designed to meet the different goals adult learners have in continuing their education. Last year, these programs provided a high school diploma or certificate of equivalency to more than 6,500 adults. That is 6,500 more Ohioans who can advance their education and secure better jobs, with more opportunities to provide for themselves and their families. To better serve adult learners, we are seeking to consolidate funding for these adult education programs into one line-item (ALI 200572) to allow for greater flexibility. By merging these separate line items, the Department can direct money toward these programs based on the level of interest.

These programs work hand in hand with other adult educational programs funded through the Department of Higher Education, including the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program and the state's Ohio Technical Centers. Our two agencies work collaboratively to ensure that adults find the best program to meet their specific needs and ensure a successful experience and outcome.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We want our education system to meet the goal of career and post-secondary readiness for every child. To do so, we must ensure that we focus on the successful implementation of policy and the continuous improvement of educational practice. Improvement is hard-wired into the very essence of our education system. Every teacher and administrator I have ever met is firmly committed to finding ways to improve. This disposition is the key to our overall strategy to reach higher accomplishments across the entire education system.

The most exciting part of our ESSA plan, in my opinion, is the flexibility it provides around school improvement. We now have the ability to shape our own approaches and do what makes sense, customized to the particular needs of each school and each community. Gone are the days of a one-size-fits-all approach to improvement.

- *Ohio Improvement Process:* Our improvement efforts will continue to be guided by the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) – a strategy-neutral planning process that guides schools and districts along the journey of identifying, planning, and implementing appropriate improvement strategies.
- *Evidence-Based Clearinghouse:* The OIP will be supported by a greater focus on evidence-based strategies available through a planned online evidence-based clearinghouse.
- *Peer-to-Peer Improvement Network:* In recognition of the powerful impact that can be achieved by learning from each other, we will create a Peer-to-Peer Improvement network to provide opportunities for educators to collaborate beyond school walls and district boundaries to share what is working and strategies for overcoming obstacles.
- *State Support Teams:* State Support Teams, made up of local Ohio educators with a history of school improvement assistance, and ESCs must play a strong role in supporting improvement. High quality, regionally deployed technical assistance expertise is a cost effective and high-impact approach to supporting improvement activity.
- *Rural Education Strategy:* Ohio's rural areas face unique challenges and have unique needs. We are working to design and deploy a specific effort directed at meeting rural improvement needs leveraging key partners, federal funding set-asides, focused technical assistance, and dedicated staff.
- *Urban Education Strategy:* The Department will continue its efforts to network and support Ohio's urban districts and foster collaboration and access to resources to drive improvement in challenging urban areas.

A portion of the budget's foundation funding line item (ALI 200550) is set aside for school improvement activities. The budget recommends funding at $12 million in each fiscal year to create tools and supports for all Ohio schools and districts.

Providing Mentoring Opportunities for At-Risk Students
Helping students succeed extends beyond activities in the classroom. Research tells us that students need caring adults in order to achieve success. Community Connectors (ALI 200629) pairs students with positive adult role models. Since 2015, Governor Kasich's Community Connectors grant program has brought together the business, education, nonprofit, and faith- and values-based communities to provide mentoring to more than 50,000 students across Ohio. The grant targets students in grades 5-12 in low-performing, high-poverty schools, seeking to make a long-term impact on Ohio communities. The proposed budget maintains funding at $10 million in each fiscal year, allowing this work to continue.

Confronting Drug Abuse
We also cannot ignore the opiate crisis unfolding around us which has its harshest impact on our children. Schools are well positioned to reach large numbers of students with an effective anti-drug message. Start Talking! remains one of the most important support programs that we can offer to our schools. Children whose parents talk to them about drug use are up to 50% less likely to use drugs or abuse prescription medications. That is why Start Talking! offers a suite of tools and resources, free of charge, to parents and educators on alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Through continued cross-agency collaboration with our partners at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department will use the resources in the budget to continue to offer these vital supports to our students.

Leveraging Essential Partners
I often say, "School improvement is everyone's business!" Not only does every part of the education system need to be committed to effective improvement, but we need all the help we can get from any and every group or organization that cares about our children. This means we need the full collaboration and partnership of colleges of education, our ESCs, social and health service providers and organizations, state and local government agencies, and the business community. With regard to this latter point, I am so very appreciative to my fellow cabinet members across at least a dozen different agencies that contribute to supporting the work in education.

SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING EDUCATORS

When I visit schools, I am always impressed by the knowledge and professionalism of the teachers and principals I encounter. Just like when I was a student, I learn something new from each teacher I meet. These educators come to school every day wanting to be their absolute best and they work diligently to create the conditions for their students to be successful. We owe these professionals a support structure that feeds their desire for growth and improvement. With this in mind, we are focused on a number of teacher support initiatives:

- *Ohio Teacher Evaluation System Reforms:* I recently asked the Educator Standards Board to develop a set of recommendations to refine the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). We have heard so much feedback on OTES and the desire to focus more on driving professional growth and improvement rather than judging teacher performance. We expect to have those recommendations shortly and look forward to working with the General Assembly and the State Board of Education to make appropriate improvements.
- *Principal Excellence:* We are launching an effort to identify how to best support principals' continuous improvement and ensure an effective leader in every building. The Department is convening a group of

advisors that will review the current state of the principalship in Ohio and then consider strategies that can support principals as they improve and grow in their professional practice. An excellent principal in every school is fundamental to reaching our educational system's fullest potential.

- *Resident Educator Program:* The Resident Educator Program provides an important service to ensure the quality of Ohio's new teachers by giving them in-school experience with the support of a teacher mentor. In response to feedback from educators, we have made a number of changes to the program to significantly reduce burdens on licensure candidates. We will continue to seek out feedback on the Resident Educator process and explore additional program modifications in the interest of making it more efficient without diminishing its effectiveness. Recognizing that some parts of the Resident Educator program are seen as duplicative with teacher evaluation processes, we supported changes enacted in Senate Bill 3 of the 131st General Assembly which give districts the option to exempt teachers participating in the Resident Educator assessment from OTES.
- *Educator Preparation Alternatives:* Alternative educator preparation programs support new and different approaches to addressing our education workforce needs. The budget recommends continued funding for Teach for America and the innovative BRIGHT New Leaders for Ohio's Schools principal training program, which is placing high quality principal candidates in some of Ohio's most challenging educational settings.
- *Simplified Career-Technical Licensure:* Building on legislation enacted under Senate Bill 3 of the 131st General Assembly, recommended budget provisions would create two new career-technical educator licenses. These licenses would place greater emphasis on work experience, but still require specific college-level training aligned with the Department's career-technical and workforce development competencies.

QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Ohio values offering students and families educational options and acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach is not sufficient. Students may thrive and prosper in different educational settings. The budget recommendations impact a number of Ohio's quality educational options.

- *Scholarship Programs:* The Governor's recommendations provide for continued funding for the EdChoice Scholarship program, the Cleveland Scholarship program, the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship, and the Autism Scholarship. Eligibility for the EdChoice expansion program will be extended to 4th grade in FY18 and 5th grade in FY19 supported by recommended funding of $38.4 million in FY18 (an increase of 21.9%) and $47.7 million in FY19 (an increase of 24.2%).
- *STEM and STEAM Schools:* Ohio will continue to support designating certain schools as STEM schools, which were recently authorized to serve the entire K-12 grade span. The budget proposes the addition of a new "STEAM" designation, putting an additional emphasis on the arts, and further expanding interest in these programs.
- *Community Schools:* Our work on community schools will continue to focus on quality. It includes an increase in the operating budget of the Office of Community Schools to ensure the continued effective implementation of the provisions of House Bill 2 of the 131st General Assembly.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OPERATIONS

Our work to implement House Bill 2 is just one example of an emphasis in this budget on improving the operations of the Department. When I was appointed by the State Board of Education, I accepted the responsibility of ensuring that the Department ran effectively and efficiently. This work has taken many forms

and focused on various critical functions. It has also been guided by a desire to shift the orientation of the Department from one of simple compliance to the important functions of support and technical assistance.

Updating Services and Improving Data Quality

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a statewide system for Ohio's schools to report information about demographics, attendance, course offerings, financial data, and test results. Based on this information, The Department determines funding, generates the local report card, and provides support to schools.

EMIS has received criticism in the past several years, including several audit findings and a separate report by the Auditor of State highlighting the challenges of the system. In response to the identified challenges, I engaged two external entities to review key aspects of EMIS:

1) The Office of Internal Audit of the Office of Budget and Management conducted a review of key process components.
2) The Department arranged for consulting services with information technology experts from Accenture to conduct a thorough review of key infrastructure and system maintenance features.

Both of these efforts have helped to shape the roadmap for restoring the credibility and functionality we need and require from this system. We will be working with Representative Brenner to ensure regular convening of the EMIS Advisory Committee throughout the year in an ongoing effort to ensure EMIS efficacy.

The executive budget recommends an increase in the EMIS line-item (ALI 200446) to support essential system improvements and for additional staff. We are also requesting $400,000 in each year for training to be provided to local schools and districts through the state's Information Technology Centers. The training will target EMIS coordinators and other school administrators.

Two other notable areas are identified for increases:

- *Accountability/Report Cards* (ALI 200439): The increase to this line item will support continued programming and technology support to ensure effective and efficient report card production and reporting.
- *Medicaid in Schools* (ALI 657401): This new line item will be used to support the Department's administration of this program which provides federal Medicaid reimbursement to schools for eligible services provided to eligible students.

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

While our primary focus is on school improvement, we continue to believe there is an important place for innovation in education. Not everyone can be, or needs to be an innovator, but proven innovative approaches give us new tools and techniques which can then be shared, scaled, and used to further strengthen the educational opportunities we provide our students.

Innovating New Approaches to Learning

One area of innovation involves fundamentally rethinking how students' progress in their learning over time. Recognizing that students learn at different paces, the Department is exploring ways to allow students to advance based on competency and readiness. In the last biennium, the legislature approved the Competency-Based Education (CBE) pilot. Five locations have been planning their strategies and have begun implementing their plans to advance students based on the mastery of competencies, rather than on seat time. As we move

into the implementation phase of the pilot, we are beginning to see opportunities to inform the future development of statewide programs and policies.

Our work in competency-based education, and other innovative education strategies including STEM schools and personalized learning will be supported by a new Office of Innovation (ALI 200471). Governor Kasich's budget recommends $750,000 each year of the biennium for this purpose. With the continued support of the legislature, the Office of Innovation will facilitate the development of policies, professional development of teachers, and promotion of practices based on the work of the Competency Based Education pilot, and other education innovations that produce results.

Encouraging Innovation in the Classroom

Our knowledge of innovative approaches is enhanced by the tremendous investment and committed that has been made to the Straight A fund. In the FY14-15 biennial budget, Governor Kasich proposed the Straight A Fund (ALI 200648) to help Ohio schools launch creative new ideas for improving education. Thanks to the $280 million set-aside by the legislature over the last four years, more than 500 schools and ESCs around Ohio have benefited from Straight A funding. This infusion of resources has stimulated many new practices changing education all across the state. We have seen some wonderful success stories emerge from the Straight A Fund. For example:

- 20 rural school districts in eastern Ohio have created a collaborative transportation network, saving millions of dollars and improving the efficiency of pupil transportation.
- Tri-Rivers Career Center in Marion created an advanced robotics program, RAMTEC, which has since expanded to eight additional career centers around the state. RAMTEC is a national model for training students in advanced manufacturing using robots.
- Mentor opened the Paradigm Center, a professional development and distance learning center that is providing exciting new opportunities to educators and students in Lake County.

One of the primary goals of the Straight A Fund is to find innovative ideas that can be reproduced on a larger scale. The changes recommended in this budget allow the Straight A Governing Board to award a new type of grant. The original innovation grants would continue, but the Board could also award replication grants, which would be used specifically to replicate previous projects considered worthy of imitation. The executive budget recommends $15 million in each fiscal year for this purpose.

CONCLUSION

Building for Ohio's Next Generation

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is an exciting time for education in Ohio! Thanks to the vision and leadership of Governor Kasich, the General Assembly, and the State Board of Education, we're poised to reach higher, make progress and advance the cause of helping every student reach their fullest potential. I believe we have what it takes to be the best education system in the country and among the best in the world. There is no doubt in my mind that if we continue to work together, and commit ourselves to improvement, we can achieve our goals. We owe it to our children and our future to get there.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today! I look forward to working closely with the Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee to further explore the details of the Department's budget recommendations.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.