

Testimony for the
Senate Finance Committee
State of Ohio

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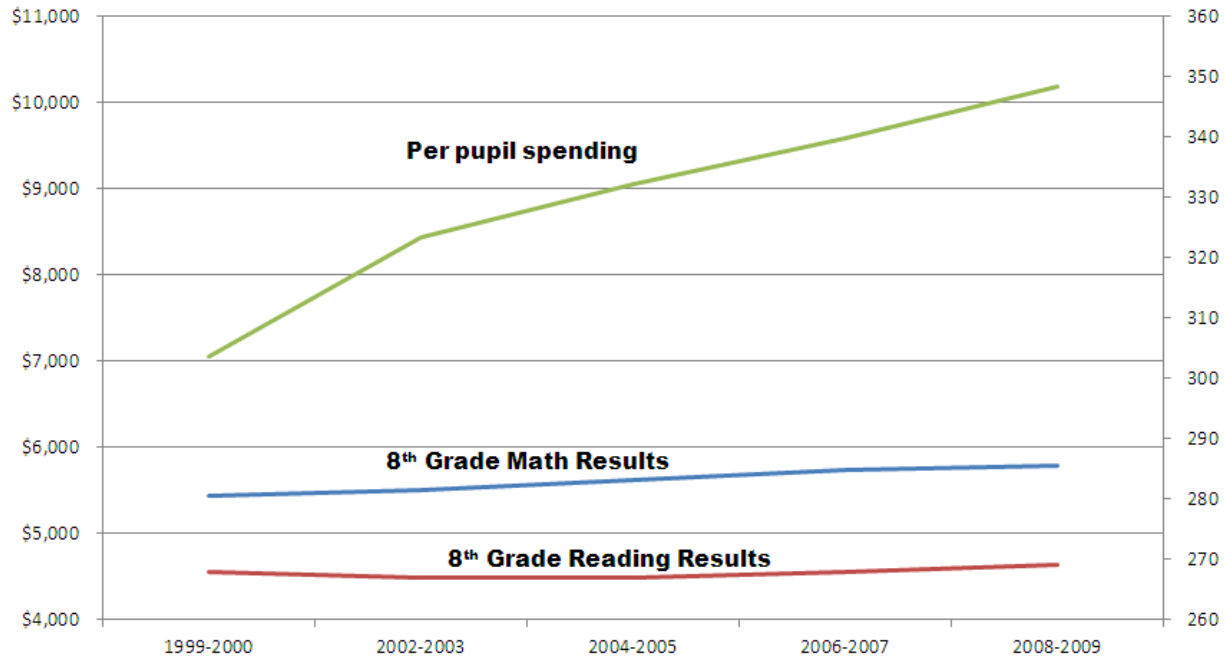
Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share the Governor's reform agenda for education. These reforms are critical if we are to prepare our students of success in the 21st century and for schools to deal with the difficult economic times we find ourselves. These reforms are critical to the success of the budget we are proposing for schools. These reforms are also critical to our efforts to get better results and more value for Ohio's taxpayers.

I feel fortunate to be here sharing this information and providing you support as you deliberate on these very important matters. I've spent nearly my entire life in education...as a student, teacher, Ohio Department of Education employee, elected school board member, superintendent of a school district, adjunct professor, CEO of a charter management company, and an education reform advocate. The reforms I will present today are consistent with my over 32 years of experience around what makes schools great. If implemented, they will make a tremendous difference for Ohio's students.

In 1983, a report titled A Nation at Risk warned that our children were falling dangerously behind the academic achievement of foreign students. Approximately a quarter of a century later, our nation's children perform below the average of developed countries in the world on math and science tests. If Ohio were a country, our children would perform on par with the students from Iceland and Estonia.

In Ohio, spending has increased, while achievement has remained flat. Whatever our spending has bought, it has not produced higher student achievement. In some districts, spending continues to climb, even as student enrollments shrink. Furthermore, we are 47th in terms of dollars to the classroom and 9th in terms of spending on administration. A recent report by Knowledge Works indicates that we could save \$1.4 billion annually in non-instructional costs if schools merely followed the practices that our best schools have implemented.

Higher costs, stagnate results



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), OH DOE

High performing schools and schools that have beaten the odds have common characteristics.

1. Everyone at these schools knows where they stand on student results. They **rank themselves against high performing schools**, not just schools that let them look good.
2. The adults in these schools take **responsibility for student success**. They refuse to **blame** poverty, parents, and poor support for students who come up short. They know all students can learn and they know it is their job to make sure they do. This sense of responsibility inspires students, parents and community members to also take responsibility.
3. Students and their success become the focus of daily work. All decisions are driven by a simple question...**Will this improve student results?**
4. High performing schools **embrace choice**. They recognize that when adults compete for the right to educate children, the children win.
5. They **require and pursue flexibility**. When they meet a rule or law that doesn't make sense, they go about changing it! They never use it as an excuse.

6. Finally, high performing schools don't just add computers and call it technology. They change the way they do business to **capitalize on innovation**.

Based on these characteristics the Governor's reform agenda will make Ohio a leader in student success. It will put our collective focus on what is **right for students**. It will let us make full use of modern technology and best practices to create a better education system that is affordable for the taxpayer.

First, we will put superior teachers in every classroom and excellent principals in every school. We want to make Ohio the preferred destination for creative, talented educators who know they make the difference in whether students succeed or not. The House and Senate have taken a first step in this quest by passing legislation that allows Teach for America to operate in Ohio.

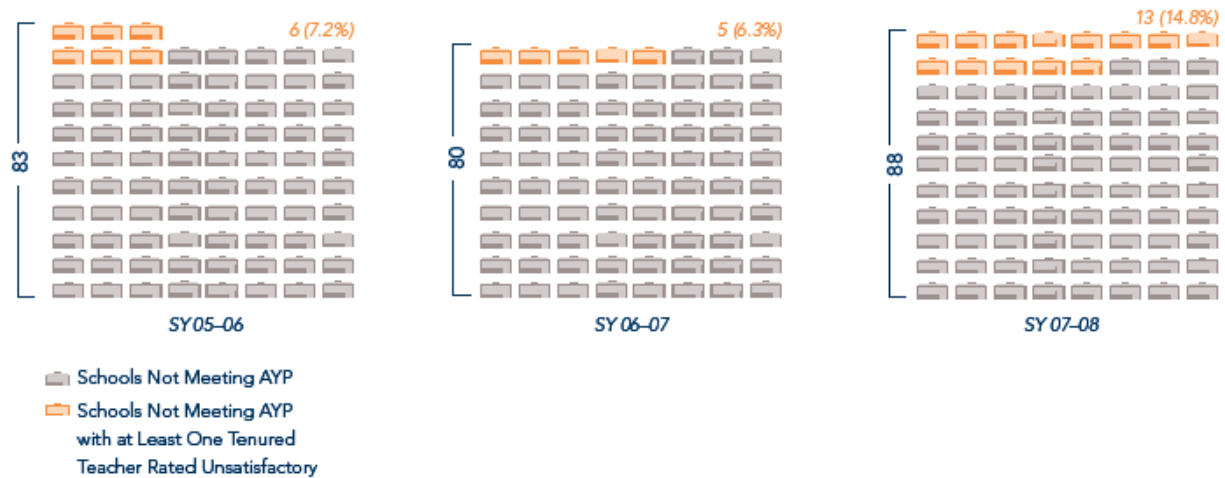
Highly effective teachers make a tremendous difference in student learning. According to Marzano, "Exceptional performance on the part of teachers not only compensates for average performance at the school level, but even ineffective performance at the school level." (Marzano, A new era of school reform: Going where the research takes us, 2000, p. 81).

We will pay teachers a bonus when their students succeed.

We will implement a rigorous educator evaluation system that combines student learning gains with professional practice, parent and student feedback, and observations to rate educators as highly effective, effective, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory. This evaluation system will apply these ratings to professional development and employment decisions.

According to The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness, "The disconnect between teacher evaluation systems and actual teacher performance is most strikingly illustrated by the wide gap between student outcomes and teacher ratings in many districts." Note the figure below from the report which shows the incredible difference between teacher evaluation results and student learning results. Our evaluation system will end this disconnect.

FIGURE 03 | Frequency of Unsatisfactory Ratings in Denver Public Schools that Did Not Meet AYP¹⁸



These findings are consistent with a one year snapshot of data from other districts. Less than 10 percent of Rockford’s failing schools rated a tenured teacher unsatisfactory in 2007–08, and none of Cincinnati’s failing schools did.

Also, we are going to end the use of seniority in employment decisions. According to The New Teacher Project, only 13-16% of the teachers laid off in a seniority-based system would also be cut under an effectiveness-based system.

A quality evaluation system will provide the opportunity to compensate teachers on the basis of quality instead of tenure and degrees. This will provide educators with a fair compensation system based on job performance, not length of employment.

We are also going to test teachers in chronically failing schools. This process has been very successful for Massachusetts and is identified as a major factor in their educational system improvements.

Finally, we will streamline the teacher dismissal process. Currently, teachers have two avenues to follow for due process, their contractual procedures and the court systems. Under our reforms, they would choose one of these. We assure teachers get quality due process without abusing the system.

Second, we will support innovative schools and close failing ones. Our reforms begin with greater transparency in school performance. We will be ranking schools on the basis of their student results and their costs. Parents and communities deserve to know how well their schools are doing in very clear, understandable terms. These rankings will use existing data and will focus on student achievement, student growth, and cost effectiveness. From this more transparent performance platform, we will build a number of systems that support quality and target poor performers.

We begin with a recognition program for high performing schools. Ohio has many high quality schools including some schools in urban settings. These schools deserve recognition. The rest of Ohio's schools also need to know where success is happening so they can learn from these best practice schools.

Accelerating the creation of high performing schools will be made possible by the creation of innovation schools. We will give teachers, based on a vote in the school, the right to create an innovation school. This designation will allow the teachers and principal flexibility from many local and state contracts, rules, and regulations. Collective bargaining agreements will be fair game in the deregulation process, but only if 60% of the union members at the school agree.

While we wish all schools were great, we realize this isn't the case. When schools fail, children's lives are put at risk. If there were a physical emergency such as a fire, we would rush in and get our children away from the danger. Unfortunately, we haven't been nearly as aggressive at rescuing our children from schools in academic emergency. We're going to follow the lead of California where parents are allowed to take over failing schools. The House made this a pilot project in Columbus, but we are concerned about all Ohio's children and we strongly encourage the implementation of this provision statewide.

We are also going to close chronically failing schools. Closing doesn't mean sending the children away. It means sending the adults away and replacing them with a new team of educators who are positioned to succeed with the children.

Third, we are going to invest in students, not bureaucracies. There are considerable efficiencies possible in our school system. As noted earlier, KnowledgeWorks has benchmarked highly efficient school districts within each group of schools (i.e., city, suburban, urban) and then they compared the efficiencies of all schools compared to these top performers. They

found an estimated \$1.4 billion in possible savings. These savings were in the non-instructional side of the school business. Even if we could realize ½ of this estimate, we would more than cover the loss of annual federal stimulus funds. Making it easier for schools and local governments to work together through shared services is important for these savings to occur.

Fourth, we are going to increase choice – We’re going to let parents choose schools that are safe and where they know their children will learn. We are doubling EdChoice Scholarship availability each year of the biennium. We are also removing the cap on the number of charter schools except for poorly performing charter sponsors.

Finally, we are going to make Ohio’s education system tech friendly Education has failed to embrace the power of technology to extend the positive impact of great educators to more students. The power of technology to drive educational innovation can be seen in the following examples...Sal Kahn Academy and a recent report from the Innosight Institute, The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning: Profiles of Emerging Models (http://www.innosightinstitute.org/blended_learning_models/).

Google Sal Kahn and you will see an incredible story about a hedge fund operator who, in response to a family members need for better math instruction, created over 2,000 mathematics lessons that are accessed by millions of students around the world. The cost to the student....free! The impact on how we view education...priceless!

The models in the Innosight report will give you a glimpse into the creativity being applied to the learning process. These are cutting edge models that fully integrate technology, are focused on student learning and cost effectiveness.

We’re going to make it a student’s right to choose online learning options. We are also going to simplify the maze of bureaucracies that manage our state technology system. The latter will be accomplished through the creation of a Digital Learning Taskforce commissioned to provide recommendations on how to streamline our multiple leadership bodies and to position Ohio to be the preferred location of the latest technology innovation.

Taken together, our reforms will assure Ohio schools have the tools, opportunities, and incentives to be great schools, just like the ones highlighted at the beginning of the testimony. Thank you and I will be happy to entertain any questions you may have.