



## **OFT TALKING POINTS FOR EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT REGIONAL MEETING QUESTIONS**

These are talking points to help guide our members in stakeholder conversations around the opportunities for improving education via ESSA. Members should share their own personal experiences while making the points indicated in the OFT document.

### **School Improvement and Student Supports**

#### **1. How can Ohio best assist schools and districts to improve outcomes for students and improvement plans.**

Ohio has already created a self-analysis tool through the OIP – a way to determine the reality of what is happening in the district. Policy and funding needs to be created to allow for the collaboration needed among the educators in the school/district that allows for the proper diagnosis of the environment and to allow for the creativity in the educators to suggest solutions. In other words, the best thing the state can do is stay out of the way. Allow district educators and community stakeholders to determine what is needed for students, then the state should provide the resources to make it happen.

#### **2. What types of information and support do school districts need to better address the needs of students?**

Schools need to use existing tools to help them dive deeply and find the causes for absenteeism, truancy, health issues and behavioral problems. There needs to be better interagency cooperation at the state and county level.

#### **3. What types of strategies help reduce bullying and harassment and suspensions and expulsions?**

Bullying is best addressed through creating an environment of respect for all students. Examples need to be set that indicate bullying and harassment will not be tolerated. There are a myriad of programs that a school can choose to help set this climate. PBIS is one of the many but needs to be implemented with fidelity. That can be said about all strategies. It is not the strategy alone that creates success, but how it is implemented with fidelity that will allow for its success. Social Emotional Learning programs are also instrumental in helping students learn to deal with life stressors that impact learning. Restorative justice programs are more effective with turning around behaviors than suspensions or expulsions.

#### **4. What role should student support (wraparound) services play in the school environment?**

Students cannot be expected to learn to their full potential if their basic needs are not met. Wraparound services help address the non-academic barriers that are impacting the ability to learn. Academic interventions linked to community services that address a student's non-academic needs are critically important.

## **Standards and Assessments**

### **1. Are you familiar with Ohio Academic Content Standards? What types of revisions, if any, would you recommend?**

OFT has been supportive of Common Core standards but recognizes that some tweaks need to be made. We support the process ODE has been doing for making adjustments to the standards. For example, through the review of math content standards, Ohio teachers indicated that they thought it was important to teach money – a standard that was previously in place but was not in Common Core. Based on feedback from teachers ODE will be putting this standard back. The key issue here is that there should always be a process in place for teachers to review standards, comment on any issues, ask for clarity, and request changes. It is essential that review of the standards be an ongoing process and the input of those implementing them in the classroom be a foundation for making revisions. The ESSA process would benefit from having educators involved in the same way.

### **2. How are the results of assessments used in your school or district?**

Results of tests are being used as 35 percent-50 percent of a teacher's evaluation. The Value-added measure generated for state assessments was never intended to be used for measuring teacher quality. In fact, several published reports discredit the use of value added in teacher evaluations. In addition, the results of the test are a year behind the actual evaluations.

Ohio may feel it has reduced the number of state tests, but as long as the tests are used to label students, teachers, schools and districts, more layers of testing will be added at a district level to check progress towards the state assessment or to generate scores for a teacher evaluation. These additional tests are often disruptive to actual learning time and are not near as effective in driving student instruction as teacher-developed formative assessments.

### **3. What changes, if any, would make state assessment results more useful at the local level?**

- Timely return of test scores would enable districts to make decisions about students such as supports needed, interventions and class placement.
- Computer adaptive testing should also be discussed by stakeholders to determine if this type of testing would actually better reflect the learning of students in a less stressful environment.
- Need to constantly monitor assessments for alignment with curriculum, age appropriateness and clarity of questions. Also important that assessments are reflecting content knowledge and not just computer skills.
- Amount of time spent on mandated testing should be reduced to absolute minimums in order to provide more time for meeting the immediate needs of students based on classroom assessments that are more meaningful and provide feedback that impacts instruction.

### **4. Should Ohio consider the use of nationally-recognized high school assessments (ACT/SAT) in place of the current high school state assessments?**

No stance at this time. Starting in spring 2017 the state will pay for students to take ACT tests. The question is whether this assessment should replace end of course exams. Our main concern is that, whatever assessments are chosen, they are selected because they are aligned and reflective of student learning and not simply a choice that gives the state a number for accountability purposes.

## **Accountability**

### **1. How could Ohio improve the existing school/district report card?**

- Ohio should not use a single summative score for districts. Single scores are used to rate and sort districts and are not indicative of all the work that actually happens in a district. They are particularly unfair to urban districts and high-poverty districts.
- Likewise, letter grades should not be used on report cards. Letter grades carry with them connotations that do not match what is actually happening in schools. The grades are over-reliant on standardized test scores.
- Report cards should be simplified and should reflect more about the district than what is indicated on standardized tests.
- Indicators that are currently used such as K-3 Literacy and Prepared for Success should be reviewed to assure that the information being provided to the public is a true reflection on the district.

### **2. ESSA requires inclusion of a non-academic measure (i.e. student engagement, school culture, etc.) in our accountability system. What do you recommend Ohio use?**

Whatever measures are used must be adequately resourced by the state and reflect factors that impact the whole child. Possible factors could be access to the arts and a properly staffed library, access to student supports (wraparound services), safety and security factors. Important to note that some measures, such as the ones suggested in the question, can be corrupted when used for high stakes. We caution against choosing non-academic indicators that satisfy the federal requirement, but really do not give the public an accurate accounting of what is happening in the district.

### **3. What factors should Ohio consider when establishing minimum group sizes for reporting and accounting purposes.**

The higher the number, the more unfairly it reflects on urban districts. Ohio needs to determine a number that is statistically sound but does not allow suburban and smaller districts to hide students while larger districts are held accountable.

### **4. How might Ohio measure improvement in reducing achievement gaps?**

We need to push back on this question to ask how is Ohio going to provide supports for reducing achievement gaps. In order to close gaps, students need additional supports such as smaller class sizes, more interventions and health services to name a few.

### **5. What would you recommend for measuring the progress of English learners?**

Again we need to push back to ask how Ohio is going to properly resource schools to fully educate English learners. Schools have to take into account not only language barriers but also cultural barriers that may make the initial phases of the learning process more difficult. Progress will not happen on the same timeline for all students so any measures must allow for students to learn at their own pace.

## Educator Effectiveness

### **1. What are the qualities of an effective teacher? What state level professional development priorities would you recommend?**

Teachers should speak from their experience on this. The important piece is that effectiveness is not captured by a test score.

It is useful to note that the state, through the Educator Standards Board, has already developed standards that reflect the qualities of an effective teacher. Further, OTES is based on these qualities. If we believe in the standards, we should be supporting teacher development that allows them to meet the standards at high levels.

Some qualities that could be mentioned are:

- Able to build supportive relationships with students
- Empathetic – able to understand the challenges of the children and the communities where they live
- Skilled at classroom management
- Able to differentiate instruction
- Able to engage students and teach them how to learn – not just content knowledge

Possible professional development topics are social emotional learning, assessment literacy, labor/management collaboration. More important to ask is how to assure a system of professional learning that addresses the needs of educators, assuring they get what they need for their particular situation.

The delivery method is critical. PD should fit local and/or personal situations. PD should be teacher-led, job embedded and shared among peers. We caution that “state level” PD is often not effectively nor efficiently delivered. Webinars and regional sessions that do not reach all of the teachers in a building, while perhaps high quality, do not have the impact of teacher driven PD delivered locally and based on the needs of that school/district. If “state level” PD is developed, it should be done in such a way that a system of delivery allows for a school/district that indicates the PD is needed may use it locally and with all teachers.

### **2. Although not required in the ESSA state plan, how can our state improve OTES?**

Remove the Student Growth Measures. Concentrate on the rubric and assure that evaluators are not only trained to evaluate but to be able to provide resources for teachers that need help. Using a PAR program that allows good teachers to work with those who are struggling is the best method to assure that teachers that need help developing their skills get the full attention they need.

In order to keep from OTES being a compliance-driven exercise, allow districts to focus on parts of the rubric that align with district goals. Also, remove the requirement for evaluations every year so that evaluators can have more time to adequately perform evaluations.