



# TRANSFORMING OHIO FOR JOBS + GROWTH

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## 2014 MID-BIENNIUM REVIEW

### **Dropout Prevention, Preparing Students for Careers Sooner, Increasing Community Involvement with Kids**

Gov. John Kasich has always made education a top priority, based on his firm belief that every child deserves a high-quality education, a pathway to a job and the ability to reach their God-given potential. For example, his *Achievement Everywhere Plan*, signed into law in 2013, provided \$1.6 billion in new resources for Ohio schools. The Kasich plan took steps to build on proven school improvement initiatives like the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, A-to-F Report Card and Cleveland School Plan to help better educate Ohio's children and prepare them for successful careers. Now, with proposals advanced by the Kasich Administration's 2014 Mid-Biennium Budget Review (MBR), important new steps are underway to strengthen education in Ohio and prepare youth for life.

**Dropout Prevention—Helping Keep Ohio Students in Schools:** To help more of the nearly 24,000 Ohio students who drop out of school every year stay in school and get their high school diplomas, the governor's initiative is providing new ways to identify these at-risk students earlier in their school careers and then devise alternative strategies that better engage them. The Ohio Department of Education and local school districts now are working together on new strategies for more effectively identifying students at risk of dropping out, connecting them with tailored career counseling, and creating new, alternative pathways to diplomas.

**Dropout Recovery—Helping Ohio Adults Without Diplomas Get Back on Track:** As many as one million Ohio adults lack a high school diploma. After the age of 22, adults are no longer eligible for traditional high school diplomas, but now thanks to MBR reforms, community colleges and career centers can create new initiatives to help adults earn credits toward a high school diploma while pursuing job training coupled with credential efforts.

**Encouraging Mentorship through Community Connectors:** Another initiative of the governor's MBR is directing \$10 million from lottery proceeds to provide 3-to-1 matching grants in support of cooperative mentoring efforts by community groups, their local business partners and the schools. Quality mentoring programs have proven to be effective at helping motivate and inspire students, as well as help them develop skills that lead to success in school and the workplace.

**Expanding Access to Career Technical Education:** Through the MBR, Governor Kasich has made Ohio's high-quality network of technical and vocational education available to students beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, giving more Ohio students a jumpstart on career education. School districts can opt-out of the expansion by passing resolutions.

**Making Certain That Ohio's New Learning Standards Work:** Ohio schools have worked hard towards implementing more challenging learning expectations as part of Ohio's New Learning Standards, which were adopted in 2010. The MBR took steps to preserve local control, protect student privacy, and delay consequences for poor performance until the new standards and assessments can be better understood.

- **Preserving Ohio's Tradition of Strong, Independent Local Schools:** Setting high expectations for our kids is essential to preparing them for successful futures. This also helps hold students and our schools accountable, but parents and local communities must remain in control—not federal bureaucrats. New reforms to Ohio's learning standards accomplish this by:
  - Ensuring that local schools call the shots in developing the curricula that work best for their unique communities, including selecting textbooks, writing lesson plans, selecting literary texts, and choosing other instructional materials;
  - Reaffirming existing state laws and rules that protect every student's privacy and personal education information.

- Delaying Consequences for a Year: Ohio will delay for one year certain consequences for teacher evaluations and school report cards related to standards-based assessments, giving everyone more time to understand the standards and ensure they are working well and as intended.
- Getting More Input on Ohio's Learning Standards: To help ensure that the new learning standards meet Ohio's needs, new review committees will examine Ohio's standards for English/Language Arts, Mathematics and Science and Social Studies.

**Taking Important New Steps to Improve School Safety for Ohio's 1.6 Million Students**: Last summer, Gov. Kasich's FY14-15 budget provided \$12 million for improved security at schools. Last year, Ohio also created the Center for P-20 Safety and Security, a single organization within the Ohio Department of Education charged with ensuring student safety from preschool to college. These steps are helping fulfill the governor's long-held commitment to improving school safety and are based on the commonsense understanding that two key strategies to minimizing threats are good security plans and support to local schools so they can prepare and practice them. Now, through a combination of MBR-inspired legislation and agency initiatives, the Kasich Administration is taking important new steps to further enhance the safety of our students – and give greater peace of mind to their parents.

- Providing Additional Funding for Security Upgrades at Schools: The MBR included \$17 million in additional funding for school security upgrades through the Ohio School Facilities Construction Commission. Of that amount, \$10 million is designated for public schools to improve building security and purchase emergency radio equipment and another \$7 million is for private schools to make similar upgrades.
- Building Stronger Safety Plans: Almost all schools currently submit safety plans, but many of those plans could be strengthened. Schools will be asked to compare their existing plans to a model plan developed by the Attorney General's School Safety Task Force that outlines the best approaches to keeping kids safe. State experts, including those in the Department of Public Safety-Office of Homeland Security, will review the information and provide guidance to help schools implement best practices and improve their plans.
  - *Ensuring Annual Reviews of Safety Strategies*: School safety plans should not sit on a shelf collecting dust. Schools will now be required to review their plans each year.
  - *Protecting Students in Every School*: Proposed legislation will impose penalties, up to revocation of a superintendent's license, for schools that fail to submit a safety plan.
    - Legislation spurred by the governor's MBR has closed loopholes in previous law that had exempted some types of Ohio schools from a requirement to develop safety plans.
    - Through a federal grant, the state Emergency Management Agency and the University of Findlay now provide expert training, free of charge, to schools and local first responders. This will help local educators develop comprehensive safety initiatives in cooperation with local law enforcement. Similarly, state Homeland Security is available to provide technical assistance at no cost to local stakeholders as they develop and implement school safety plans in their community.
    - An existing statewide hotline is being revamped and improved, offering Ohio schools a way for students to report potential suicide, school shooting, bullying or other problems anonymously. There will be no cost to the schools for this service.

**BOTTOM LINE**: Every student deserves access to the educational resources that prepare them for career opportunities that are right for them. An important resource is career education because it helps motivate students to succeed and to stay in school. By better connecting students—especially those at risk of dropping out—with mentors, information on careers and job-focused training, more young Ohioans can find their ways to the fulfilling careers that allow them to reach their God-given potential.

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