

The Voice

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Ohio Core passage observed with caution

On Dec. 20 as he prepared to leave office, Gov. Bob Taft signed a bill that will require high school students to take a more rigorous selection of sources if they expect to attend most of the state's four-year colleges and universities.

The Ohio Core program requires those entering high school in 2010 to take three lab-centered science classes and four years of math, including Algebra II.

The bill saw many changes and passed only after the House increased funding for teacher support and pushed the implementation date back two years.

An amendment bolstered the budget with \$16.8 million for teacher training and retention, bringing the total to around \$30 million. Taft has recommended that the legislature spend \$120 million toward the program over five years.

Many are behind this strengthening of the requirements. Business leaders and teachers unions agree that graduating seniors need more rigorous coursework if they are to go on to meaningful higher education or good jobs.

But funding will remain a concern. OEA has stated that while it supports innovative efforts to improve academic rigor and accountability, the Core curriculum program constitutes for many districts an unfunded mandate.

OEA successfully fought for alterations that included leaving the current foreign-language requirements untouched, since many schools don't have the resources to provide two years of languages instruction for all students. An advisory council will examine the issue and develop a foreign-language plan by the end of 2007.

We will be watching carefully and will advocate for developing the right infrastructure to support this plan.

Passing Core along

The House Republicans, originators and sponsors of the Ohio Core (H.B. 79), had 49 votes lined up within their party. Despite having been the majority party, it was possible Republicans would not be able to muster enough votes to pass the bill. (In order for legislation to pass the house, 50 votes are required.)

House Democrats weren't sure they could prevent it from passing, either. "At the end of the day, Ohio Core wasn't something we were sure that we could absolutely stop," said John Kohlstrand, Rep. Joyce Beatty's Director of Communications.

To make matters worse, the idea of a Democratic assault on Ohio Core in the House was checked by the Republicans with the possibilities of what could be punitively included in other pending education legislation.

"There was a lot of loose talk about what the Republicans were going to include in H.B. 79. We had heard they wanted an increase in the number of charter schools and require the pooling of school system health care in that legislation," said Kohlstrand.

Superintendents weigh in

School officials throughout the state began to make their case with their representatives and the press. Most, though not all, were critical of Ohio Core.

"I represent Hilliard, Worthington, Dublin, in addition to the Columbus School District," said Rep. Jim Hughes (R-Columbus). "I spoke with superintendents and school treasurers when it came to this issue. John Boyd, Worthington School Treasurer, told me that they have a very limited budget, and they didn't know how they'd keep their current programs going and meet the needs of Ohio Core without significantly increased funding from the state."

Superintendent Harris took the opposite stance, publicly praising the then-pending legislation at the Dec. 5 Board meeting. In the district's e-newsletter sent out to CPS employees and the general public a week later, she went a step further. "I support Ohio Core," said Harris, adding, "...it is a step in the right direction."

The final vote

Meetings about Ohio Core between politicians, constituents and interest groups continued in the week prior to the vote.

"I had put the OEA, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, representatives from the Governor's office and the Business Roundtable in the same room together," recalls Beatty. "I said that I believed in the values of the bill but asked how we could get to a workable compromise with the majority party in power."

Representatives continued to field calls about Ohio Core right up until the day of the vote.

"Superintendent Harris called Rep. Beatty," said Kohlstrand. "She expressed her strong support for the bill."

The day of the vote, the major parties consented to a meeting about Ohio Core. "There was a closed door meeting with the Republicans," said one Democratic House insider. "We told them to take a deep breath when it came to H.B. 79. We wanted a two-year delay of the implementation of Ohio Core and increased funding for the legislation for this fiscal year."

"It came together right before the House vote," agreed Kohlstrand. "We were able to get an additional \$16.8 million in funding. More significantly, we were able to delay the start by two years from 2012 to 2014."

The Columbus Dispatch reported on Dec. 20 that Dr. Harris' support was what got Rep. Beatty to vote for the bill. Beatty denies that it was Superintendent Harris' strong support of the legislation that swayed her vote.

"The Majority Leader came to me and said he was short one vote," said Beatty. "It was a secondary concern to me that Superintendent Harris was in favor of it. I already knew there were at least one or two members of my caucus who were going to vote for the bill."

In the end, the bill passed 55-40. Six Democrats voted yes; four representatives abstained.

Board to consider public input on closings

There is considerable buzz about the recommendations of a task force considering which Columbus schools should be closed.

The Facilities Master Plan Revision Committee has been meeting since early November. On Dec. 13, it voted to recommend the closing of four schools: Douglas ES, Linden Park ES, Medary ES and Linmoor MS.

But this isn't a done deal. No action will be final until the Columbus Board of Education has voted on the committee's recommendations, pending community input. The committee set the following meetings, all held from 6–8 p.m.: Jan. 3, West HS; Jan. 4, Linden-McKinley HS; Jan. 10, East HS at Arcadia; and Jan. 16, Marion-Franklin HS.

Committee members include the following: co-chairmen Alan Davidson and Floyd Jones; Mark Delong, Paul Goggin, Rhonda Johnson, Valerie McDaniels, B. J. Simmons-Talley and Robin Taylor.

Their charge is twofold: to review the administration's recommendations for school closings, taking into account student population and distribution; and to examine Superintendent Gene Harris' modifications to the school district's \$1.6 million facilities renovation and building project. Committee members have said they would rather consider those matters separately.

Enrollment has topped the local news. Columbus Public Schools have been losing enrollment to charter schools and to the state's voucher program. The October count indicated that CPS enrollment had decreased by 3,081 since last year's count. The loss since 1999 has been about 10,000 students, about 15 percent of the total enrollment.

SuccessWorks opens this month

SuccessWorks Academy will open Jan. 22. The district's newest school will serve students in grades 3–7, focusing on positive behavior as the vehicle for meeting Ohio's Academic Content Standards.

The key methods will be PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and Project-Based Learning. The program will include:

- ◆ A behavior intervention specialist and guidance counselor
- ◆ Two school psychologists who will facilitate Positive Peer Culture
- ◆ An occupational therapist
- ◆ A martial arts instructor who will teach the self-discipline of Bushido
- ◆ Free membership to the Boys' and Girls' Club, whose facilitators will collaborate with our staff in meeting individual behavioral growth plans

Please note: There is a revised, streamlined Student Admissions Packet online. The application is available through the CPS home page. Click on the *students* icon. Under *resources*, you will see the SuccessWorks Academy link.

Applications are accepted year round. All questions can be answered by SuccessWorks Academy staff at 365-8306.

CEA spring elections

Want to get more involved? Association elections are coming, and now is the time to consider candidacy.

Members who are interested in official leadership positions may declare their candidacy for open seats now through Feb. 2.

The following positions are open: Board of Governors in Districts 2, 7, 9 and 10; and delegates and alternates to the

OEA and NEA Representative Assemblies. CEA District Governors serve for three years, elected in staggered sequence by members in those districts. NEA and OEA delegates serve for one year, elected annually.

Campaigning for these positions will take place from Feb. 20–Mar. 5. Members will vote for candidates Mar. 6–19. The CEA Elections Committee will tabulate the votes on Mar. 20.

Declaration forms are available from the CEA office. Keep reading *The Voice* for more information about the elections. Your participation is vital to our democratic process.

When violence happens

Most schools days are full of the rewards of helping students. But occasionally, teaching is interrupted by violence. Teachers sometimes become victims.

If you are assaulted on the job, remember: CEA is there is for you. It is our job to protect you and to advocate for you. But to get assistance, you must follow these important steps:

1. If you need immediate medical attention, get it. You can later secure a medical opinion. But first, take pictures of visible injuries.
2. Immediately contact your administrator, faculty representative and CEA with a verbal account of the incident.
3. Give your administrator a concise written account of the incident and a completed SCH-190. Include attacker's name, address, phone, birthdate, race and parent. Make copies.
4. Your principal should contact appropriate personnel and secure written statements from all parties involved. You should request copies.
5. Administration should notify proper agencies, including the police. You have the right to call 911 and the police yourself. (Columbus Police are at 645-4545.) You have the right to file charges.
6. Keep a record. As soon as you can, write a detailed statement of the incident and complete an Incident Report Form. File a Workers' Compensation Claim if applicable.
7. Refrain from making statements unless you are advised by legal counsel.
8. Keep all records of the incident.
9. CEA will accompany you through the process.
10. You should keep CEA and your administrator apprised of all developments.

King dinner honors activist, educator

Tickets are still available for CEA's 2007 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award Dinner. It will be held at the Hyatt Regency Columbus on Thursday evening, Jan. 11.

Jerry Hammond will receive the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award. Dorothy G. Wilson will receive the Helen Jenkins Davis Award, named in honor of the first black teacher hired by the Columbus Public Schools.

Call the CEA office at 253-4731 for ticket information.

Special notes

❑ There will be a **meeting of all high school SrFRs on Tuesday, Jan. 16, at 3:15 p.m. at Whetstone HS.**

❑ **Violent Students: How do you protect yourself?**

Future issues of *The Voice*, in partnership with the Cloppert Law Firm, will feature articles on this topic and other legal questions of interest. **Email your questions to cealegalquestions@cloppertlaw.com or call Cloppert, Latanick, Sauter and Washburn at (614) 461-4455 for all your legal needs.**