

OESCA CRITICAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

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Dan Hare (Butler County ESC)

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OESCA Staff:

Craig Burford, Executive Director

OESCA's CORE POLICY PRINCIPLES & GOALS

The Ohio Educational Service Center Association is committed to working in cooperation with school districts, allied educational organizations, state and local policy makers, and others to promote and support educational reform efforts that will provide for an efficient, effective and quality system of education that is fiscally and academically accountable and which prepares all students to achieve high levels of academic success.

In so doing, OESCA has based its legislative policy recommendations on the following core goals:

- To advocate for the well-being of children as the basis of education policy decision making.
- To support safe learning environments.
- To increase student achievement and academic success for all students.
- To provide access to a thorough and efficient education to all Ohio children regardless of where they live.
- To build school district capacity.
- To facilitate the effectiveness, professionalism, and capacity of all school personnel.
- To increase the State's capacity to effectively and efficiently serve Ohio's schools.
- To promote pre-K-16 alignment with Ohio's economic development strategic plan addressing how to align curriculum with jobs of the 21st century.
- To achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of educational and professional services to schools, both academically and financially.

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STATE FUNDING PRIORITIES

- 1. Allow Special Education Funding to Flow Directly To Educational Service Centers** - OESCA supports a statutory change to allow special education funds to flow directly from the state department of education to ESCs for the special education students served by the ESC. The state share percentage that transfers to the ESCs would be the same as under current law; the change would insure that the funds, based on the wealth factor of the district of residence, flow to the ESC or district where the student is educated.
- 2. Fully Fund the Updated Special Education Cost-based Methodology** - Ohio's system of special education funding is a 6-weight system in which each weight represents a particular category of disability. Currently, the 6-weight system is funded at 90% of the current standard which was established in 2001 as part of the FY 2002-2003 biennial state operating budget. As a result, funding of the weights is actually substantially less than 90% of today's actual costs. OESCA supports the full funding of an updated methodology based on current costs of providing special education and related services.
- 3. Provide Adequate Funding for Existing and New Preschool Special Education Units** - OESCA supports fully funding existing preschool special education units and additional units as necessary to meet the needs of all preschool special education students and the districts that serve them. This is consistent with the recommendations of the School Readiness Solutions Group and other early care and education initiatives. Ohio's school districts are required by state and federal laws to provide preschool special education services to all identified children upon their third birth date. There are currently 1,019 unfunded units. OESCA supports fully funding all existing preschool special education units, basing preschool special education unit funding on updated personnel costs, and a policy shift that encourages collaboration and cooperation in the delivery of preschool special education services through ESCs.
- 4. Continued Support for Implementation of the Ohio Core Curriculum Including Funding for Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs Developed by ESCs** - The Ohio Core program consists of several components to assist districts in building resource capacity: 1) funds for districts to contract with institutions of higher education in math, science, or foreign language for dual credit for high school students; 2) online resources for educational success in math, science and foreign language; 3) alternative teacher licensure program developed by ESCs in partnership with institutions of higher education; 4) intensive training to license mid-career professionals and currently licensed teachers in science, math or a foreign language; and 5) Dual enrollment grant opportunities. OESCA also supports policies to encourage participation by Ohio's public and private 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities.
- 5. Professional Development and Technical Assistance Funding Through ESCs to All School Districts** - OESCA supports the use of the ESCs and the newly created Ohio educational regional service system in the delivery of high quality programs and services to all Ohio school districts. Consideration should be given to utilizing the system to provide technical assistance and school improvement services to all school districts not just those identified as priority 1 and 2 academic watch and emergency school districts. Better use of existing service providers will ensure that all districts have access to state funded services necessary to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). *The Ohio educational regional service system is set to become operational on July 1, 2007 and should serve as the conduit for the roll-out of all statewide school improvement and related initiatives for all school districts.*

6. Full Funding of City County Contracts - The January 1, 1997 deadline currently in temporary language within HB 66, the 2006-2007 biennial operating budget, should be eliminated to allow for funding of eligible city-county agreements. This would allow 36 school districts to receive state supported services they are currently ineligible to receive through ESCs. Consideration should also be given to funding all school districts, up to the 13,000 ADM threshold, for curriculum, school improvement, technical assistance, and other services through Ohio's educational service centers.

- 7. Determine ESC Per Pupil Base Funding as % of Basic Aid** - Per Pupil funding for ESCs should be tied to the state basic aid foundation level so funding for ESCs increases as the foundation level increases. The adequate level for school district foundation funding should carry through for ESC services. Several policy decisions over the course of the past 5-10 years have had a significant impact on ESC funding including:
 - the transition from unit funding to weighted funding for special education,
 - flat funding over the past 7 years,
 - the loss of facility support from boards of county commissioners, and
 - the elimination of the school-based Medicaid program, CAFS.

These realities threaten the financial stability of Ohio's leading regional educational service providers.



STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1. Make ESCs Eligible Recipients of State and Federal Funds for all Available Competitive Grants** — State department of education policies and guidelines for grant awards should reflect ESC standing in both state and federal law. Utilizing ESCs to administer competitive grants provides for greater coordination and collaboration among school districts and regional service providers and enables services to be leveraged across a greater number of children, teachers, buildings and school districts. ESCs (ESAs) are defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as local education agencies. Likewise, under Ohio Revised Code §3311.055 all Revised Code references to “school districts” and “boards of education” are deemed to include ESCs and their governing boards.
- 2. Maintain and Support Increased Alignment of Regional Educational Service Providers and the Educational Regional Service System** — Consistent with the recently passed Am. Sub. H.B. 115, the focus of any system change, as it relates to the delivery of state funded school improvement and technical assistance services, should be on alignment of service providers and how to better utilize the state's existing network of Educational Service Centers, regional service providers, and the newly created Educational Regional Service System, to deliver educational services in a more effective and efficient, coordinated and systematic manner to positively impact student learning.
- 3. Address School Psychologist and Speech/Language Pathologist Shortages including Updating the Special Education Rules to Allow School Psychologist Assistants, Speech Therapist Assistants, others** — OESCA supports allowing the use of School Psychologist and Speech-Language Assistants to enable ESCs and school districts to meet critical needs in a cost-effective manner and maintain quality programs.
- 4. Utilize ESCs in the Creation of STEM High Schools** — OESCA supports efforts to promote and advance science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Ohio's K-12 education system. STEM high schools should be an integrated component of the existing public education system with similar accountability measures and not a new, separate public education system. ESCs can and should serve an integral part in the recruitment and retention of new and mid-career professionals with experience in science, technology, engineering and math, including providing alternative licensure pathways for those seeking to teach in STEM high schools.