

Ohio Race to the Top: State Success Story

This document is a summary of the key themes of Ohio's RttT application and intended as an introduction to the broad themes of our reform plan. It remains a draft, intended to engender discussion about key themes for investment and opportunities for Ohio to improve outcomes while differentiating ourselves in the competitive RttT process.

Summary:

- Ohio recognizes the magnitude of the challenge we are presented with and the historic nature of the RttT opportunity.
- We have a well-developed reform agenda in Ohio that coalesced around the very substantive reforms included in House Bill 1 (HB1). Our existing reform agenda is comprehensive, enjoys broad political support, and is aligned with the principles articulated by RttT.
- Because of the pre-existence of Ohio's reform agenda, many fundamental initiatives are already underway such that our starting point is one of action, not planning. RttT is therefore an accelerator of reform, not the impetus.
- Key areas of Ohio differentiation and RttT application emphasis include:
 - Comprehensive human capital reform, much of which is included in HB1 and will now be accelerated and rolled out more broadly. We will partner with districts to strengthen their approach to human capital and we will support the necessary transitions to higher levels of performance.
 - Increased equity in the system as a whole, including our renewed commitment to dramatic change in our lowest-performing schools and the manner in which highly effective educators are prepared and distributed across schools and classrooms.
 - Top to bottom accountability that leverages objective measures of performance, including those that reflect student growth, for all levels of the system, including higher education.
 - Value-added infrastructure adopted state-wide, immediately at the student level. This extends our successful pilot efforts to establish the usefulness of value-added data and provides an essential foundation for ongoing reform.
 - STEM education models and technical supports that will position Ohio as the leading national resource relative to STEM and educational innovation more broadly. The preparation of STEM educators is reinforced by the work we are doing with the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship initiative.
 - Leadership in the adoption of the common core standards and in understanding innovative approaches to performance assessment through the work we are doing with Stanford and others. Additionally, we will encourage the use of formative instruction and assessment in the classroom as the natural nexus of standards, data systems, and classroom practice.
- For these reasons and many others, Ohio is exceptionally well positioned to lead national educational reform.

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“Simply tinkering with centuries-old education practices will not prepare Ohio’s children for success in college, in the workplace, or in life. Therefore, today I present my plan to build our education system anew.” -- Governor Ted Strickland, January 28, 2009

In a world where brain power outstrips muscle power, where innovation trumps conformity, where the nimble and the creative will succeed; high quality education is the key to success in the next century. Ohio recognizes and embraces the enormity of this challenge as well as the historic nature of the opportunity that Race to the Top represents.

OHIO’S VISION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

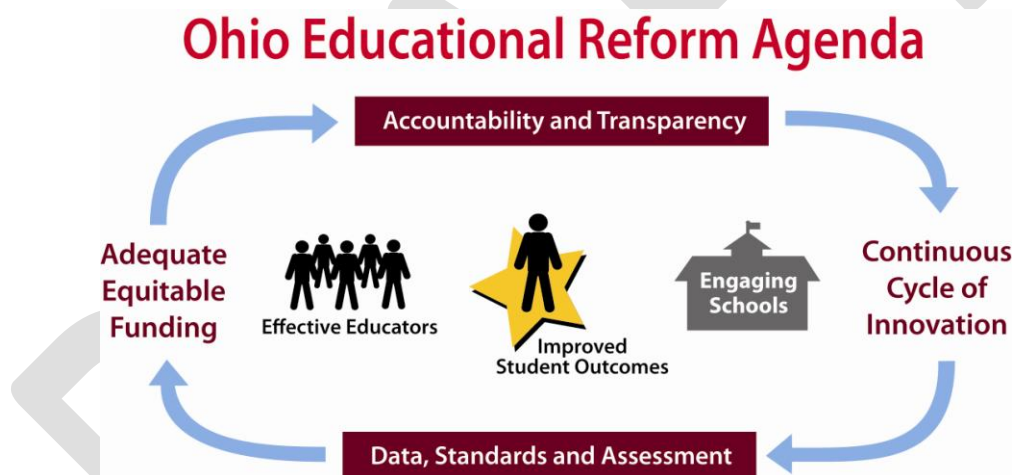
The mission for public education in the state of Ohio is to have all students reach their fullest potential and become successful economically, to experience social and emotional well-being, and to function as a productive citizen in a global society. To achieve this goal, public education must establish and maintain student-centered, personalized 21st century learning environments that foster and nurture creativity, innovation, and global competence to meet the needs of all students. Ohio’s comprehensive vision for education reform coalesced in 2009 into a statewide consensus in the form of House Bill 1 (HB1). Our longstanding goals, consistent with the objectives of Race to the Top, are to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gap and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

At the core of our reform plan is a belief that students respond most directly to effective educators in engaging classrooms and that achievement as measured in all of its many forms is a natural result of these conditions. This is the singularly dominant concept defining our reform agenda and one which our Race to the Top application will comprehensively reinforce. Effective educators and engaging educational environments too often exist in isolation however, and increasing their prevalence requires a foundation of rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards and assessments, first class data systems that extend from the state to the classroom, as

well as tools and technical assistance that support our dedicated educators as they hone their craft. A governance umbrella of accountability and high levels of transparency ensures the fidelity of the system and provides a natural catalyst for improving outcomes.

We recognize that Ohio’s education system has not met the needs of all our children equally. The achievement gap is one of the great social injustices of our generation and we share Secretary Duncan’s acute sense of urgency to address this shortcoming. We have committed ourselves to adequate and equitable funding for all students as an element of HB1 and have implemented programs specifically targeting the achievement gap. However, we realize that we have an incomplete understanding of how to support student success, especially where the need is the greatest, and must therefore develop the structures and attitudes required to support a cycle of innovation that continually lifts the system towards higher levels of performance.

Ohio’s Longstanding Education Reform Agenda



OHIO’S EXISTING FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

We arrive at this point resolved to the hard work that is to come and unwaveringly confident that we will succeed. Education has long been a core value of the State of Ohio and never more than in recent years when we sowed the seeds of reform that now have taken root. The tremendous political alignment that enabled the fundamental reforms encompassed by HB1 demonstrates the political will to act in the best interests of our children and our educators. We have gone far beyond politics however, protecting school funding in the face of daunting economic challenges, leading the nation in establishing the validity of value-added data, enacting numerous human capital reforms to better support educators, developing STEM schools which serve as national

models of success, innovation and effective public-private partnerships, driving the adoption of rigorous, internationally benchmarked academic standards, piloting performance-based assessments, and developing comprehensive longitudinal data systems that provide the underlying foundation to the system as a whole. Fundamental reform is already well underway in Ohio and we have moved far beyond planning to action.

RACE TO THE TOP ACCELERATES OUR AGGRESSIVE REFORM AGENDA

Our goals are ambitious and none will be achieved overnight, but we believe that the integrated strategies and investments we detail in this application will address our needs in a targeted and self-reinforcing manner. Our Race to the Top investments are connected by a holistic understanding of our system and where maximum leverage for long-term change can be applied. Past efforts have yielded tangible gains in performance, generating momentum behind continued reform and expanding the appetite to accelerate the work that we have begun. HB1 remains our conceptual scaffolding for reform, upon which Race to the Top sits to accelerate existing initiatives, enable initiatives lost to budgetary realities, and reinforce other efforts that are already well underway.

Accelerated Initiatives

The following initiatives reflect existing priorities within Ohio's reform agenda that are already in motion and will be accelerated to broader and faster implementation using Race to the Top resources. Multiple investments underlie these initiatives and are detailed in the related assurance sections of this application.

- **Comprehensive Human Capital Reform:** HB1 includes fundamental reforms to our human capital system, creating opportunities for differentiated roles and expanded responsibilities through our career lattice licensure structure, strengthening performance management and tenure decisions, and providing substantially greater induction support and professional development to new educators through a four-year residency program. Existing efforts to adopt alternative pay structures will be encouraged and extended. Our pipeline of new teachers and principals will experience reform also, as our Board of Regents encourages increased clinical-based programs, expands university partnerships with local school districts, and redesigns oversight processes for our teacher education

programs. These efforts reflect an investment in our educators, those who do the most to produce the outcomes we desire.

- **Equitable Education:** HB1 addresses the core issue of funding equality through the Ohio Evidence Based Model, a funding mechanism that utilizes research to determine what components are critical to student success. HB1 also includes substantial investments in aggressive programmatic initiatives that target the achievement gap directly, such as the Governor’s successful Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) program. We will do more through Race to the Top, including careful incentives to encourage highly effective educators to tackle these challenges, the development of diagnostic information systems that will increase school-level accountability and the insistence that our lowest-performing schools improve their performance or redefine themselves radically.
- **Accountability at All Levels:** A core principle of Ohio’s reform agenda is that objective accountability for all constituents is a powerful driver of performance improvement. We have multiple efforts underway to define expectations (e.g. teachers, principals, and institutions of higher education), establish relevant metrics that include measures of student achievement, complete the underlying data systems required to track them, and link outcomes to meaningful behavior incentives. This philosophy extends to the fiscal discipline of LEAs as well through the budgetary oversight mandated by HB1.
- **Value-Added Data State-wide:** Ohio is at the vanguard of the use of value-added data, having implemented at the district and building level as part of our accountability framework, and having proven the viability of the concept at the teacher level through robust, widespread pilots encompassing over 100 districts. We commit to our leadership position by extending our value-added system to every district in our state by 2011, investigating metrics for those grades and subjects not currently included, and partnering with other states to collectively guide the national debate. The required infrastructure and practical knowledge is resident in Ohio and we will pursue this goal immediately.

- **STEM Education:** Ohio is one of six states receiving competitive National Governor's Association (NGA) grants in support of STEM education. The Ohio STEM Learning Network (OSLN) is the leading organization in the development of STEM-focused schools and related curriculum. As a public-private partnership, it is a unique model that demonstrates Ohio's ability to mobilize constituents, as partners from K-12, higher education and business have stepped up to support STEM education. In total, the OSLN has over 100 LEAs who are engaged in STEM education through a STEM hub, school or program. We will capitalize on our stature as the nation's leader in this regard to become a truly national resource, supporting this work not only within Ohio but other states as well. Our work with Arthur Levine and the Woodrow Wilson STEM Fellowship Initiative, and other reforms targeting the supply of prepared STEM educators will complement our efforts by expanding our capacity to prepare tomorrow's educators for these fields.

Enabled Agenda

Race to the Top has highlighted areas of investment not wholly included in Ohio's existing reform agenda because of budgetary realities. We are pleased to expand our work to ensure the most comprehensive plan possible and have crafted initiatives in response that would not be possible without Race to the Top.

- **Emphasis on Lowest-Achieving Schools:** The achievement gap is at the absolute core of the Governor's reform agenda and impactful initiatives are already in place to combat inequity. Race to the Top's emphasis on dramatic change in our lowest-achieving schools represents a valuable extension to our existing strategies and we pledge both the will to act and the financial resources and targeted expertise necessary to support successful outcomes in these schools.
- **Support of Innovation:** Many challenges in education, particularly those related to low-performing schools, have not been solved and Ohio must do more to encourage the development of innovative programs and the distribution of highly effective ideas. Our investment in school innovation spearheads our expanded concept of how to drive improved outcomes, leveraging existing successes such as those we have had with Early

College High Schools. Importantly, we will support districts as they more deeply assess the needs of their students and develop strategies for providing a variety of school options. Our many effective charter schools and their sponsoring organizations represent an important source of innovation that we will continue to support. The new levels of charter accountability included in HB1 provide the oversight structures to enable successful charter models to flourish.

- **Improving Classroom Practice:** Race to the Top will enable us to more fully leverage our investments in standards and curriculum by supporting new initiatives to encourage the use of formative instruction practices and classroom technology by all teachers for the purposes of personalized student interactions. Through district partnerships, we will make the use of real-time data in the classroom a priority.

Reinforced Initiatives

Because of the advanced condition of some aspects of Ohio's reform efforts, various Race to the Top priorities are already substantially in motion and therefore enjoyed a relatively lesser emphasis in Ohio's application. This is not to detract from their importance to our efforts and education reform broadly, as each is an essential dimension of the reform context.

- **Increasing College Readiness Through Rigorous, Internationally-benchmarked Standards and Assessments:** Ohio is a leader in the effort to increase the rigor of standards nationally and in the adoption of the common core. We will continue this work, funded predominantly through other sources, with modest augmentation from Race to the Top to support a multi-state consortium devoted to assessment development. Additionally, we will continue our work to define performance-based student assessment in conjunction with Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University.
- **Longitudinal Data Systems:** Ohio enjoys a robust longitudinal data infrastructure that serves as the backbone for the educational system as a whole. Numerous enhancements are planned to extend the system from pre-K through to higher education. The value of the data lies in the research it supports and so Ohio will establish an educational research agenda to further our understanding of the core challenges underlying education reform.

THE ASSURANCES ARE CONSISTENT WITH OUR REFORM AGENDA

Ohio’s education reform plan is the promise to the children of Ohio that we will provide an education system that fulfills the mission to develop all students to reach their fullest potential and to become successful economically, to experience social and emotional well-being, and to function as productive citizens in a global society. Race to the Top propels our reform agenda forward.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES GOVERN OUR INVESTMENT DECISIONS

Underlying our reform agenda are a variety of direct investments, policy adjustments, and behavioral changes that must occur in concert for us to succeed. Many investments are possible and we have been reminded throughout this process that divergent perspectives exist about how tactically to achieve our goals. While there are no absolutes, the following principles have guided our decision-making and resource allocation to ensure that we achieve the optimal blend and maximum impact from our investments.

- Systemic change is our mandate and we will invest first in those reforms that promise to leave our education system fundamentally altered.
- “Operating” reforms requiring ongoing investment are included in those instances where there is a strong reason to believe that long-term benefits are possible even if the programs cease (e.g. investments that yield knowledge that will inform future practice).
- Proven strategies are preferred, but a thoughtful “portfolio” strategy is necessary as some challenges lack reliably effective and scalable interventions.
- Initiatives targeting dramatic change will be balanced with those that pursue a “revolution through persistent evolution” philosophy.
- While raising achievement levels across the system is an important goal, we will prioritize opportunities to address the achievement gap.

OHIO IS PRIMED FOR BREAKOUT RESULTS

The challenge is immense and the moment is historic. Ohio's commitment to education reform is absolute. Race to the Top is an accelerant to our existing reform agenda, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to drive radical change in a compressed time frame. We're grateful for the opportunity to support reform in this fashion and inspired to lead education reform nationally. Our established history of reform, coupled with a broad political consensus supporting our reform agenda and established successes and structures, positions Ohio to achieve truly differentiated student outcomes through our Race to the Top investments.

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