State Website Launched with Guidance on New Wraparound Services Money

The $675 million set aside in the enacted biennial state budget for school wraparound services is in the process of being distributed to school districts across Ohio. The money, allocated based on the percentage of poor students in a school, must be used in tandem with a community partner to provide a variety of services such as mentoring programs, mental health services, programs targeting children on welfare, family engagement programs, professional development regarding trauma-informed care or after hour student services.

In the wake of this funding influx, the state has set up a webpage via the Ohio Department of Education’s website to provide guidance to schools as they look to spend their new money. Here is the link: http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/Student-Wellness-and-Success. School personnel can also use the FAQ page linked on the site to find out more information about how the funding will work. Importantly, the following question regarding use of the funds for school counselors is included in the list:

Can the district use the funds to hire an additional school counselor, nurse, social worker or other personnel?
Yes, but the position must be part of a plan developed in coordination with one of the following community partners:
- board of alcohol, drug and mental health services;
- educational service center;
- county board of developmental disabilities;
- community-based mental health treatment provider;
- board of health of a city or general health district;
- county department of job and family services;
- nonprofit organization with experience serving children;
- or a public hospital agency.

OSCA Pursuing Job Description Legislation

OSCA Board Members have been working with two legislators in the House to introduce a bill creating a model job description for school counselors across the state. With school counselors spending most of their time monitoring lunch and proctoring tests, we felt a need to establish a recommended standard for the role that aligns more with ASCA’s national model. The bill requires the Ohio Department of Education to create a job description based on the Ohio Standards for School Counselors promulgated in 2016, which involved input from OSCA members, that is based on the three domains of academic, career and social/emotional development and a 80/20 percentage time split between direct/indirect services and programmatic tasks. The bill also requires that ODE designate a single point person within their department for communication with school counselors across the state.

OSCA Board Members met with ODE to discuss the bill earlier this month, along with joint sponsors Rep. Jessica Miranda (D – Forest Park) and Susan Manchester (R – Lakeview). We also have been working to solicit feedback from OEA, OFT, the Ohio School Boards Association and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials. Our goal is to introduce the bill within the next several weeks and we will make the language available to members in the OSCA Google Drive in the meantime for the full Board’s review.
On August 21, in the wake of the horrific mass shooting in Dayton, Gov. DeWine signed an Executive Order creating the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC). OSSC will be housed within the Department of Public Safety’s homeland security office and will serve as a comprehensive resource for preventing, preparing for and responding to events of violence and self-harm. The Center, active as of August 22nd, is the latest proposal in the Governor’s efforts to address gun violence, which began with a 17-point plan that included a “red flag” law, expanding background checks and increasing penalties for certain gun convictions. Legislation is currently being drafted for the 17-point plan. Governor DeWine also encouraged the Legislature to pursue its own efforts to address this issue.

The Ohio School Safety Center will have the following goals:
1. Employing intelligence analysts to use enhanced technology to scan social media for threats toward school children. If threats are identified, these staff will conduct threat analyses and share information with local law enforcement and school officials.
2. Educate school staff, students and community members about the Safer Ohio tip line.
3. Consolidate state resources on school safety and maintain a website (saferSchools.ohio.gov) with a current listing of trainings for school safety around the state.
4. Review school safety plans and emergency management plans and provide technical support for those plans.
5. Establish threat assessment model training programs for schools to train staff on with evidence-based models that identify and triage threats in schools.
6. Host annual summits for mental health professionals and school and public safety professionals to share best practices on mental health, school climate, and other safety issues.
7. Establish the Ohio School Safety Working Group (comprised of 7 experts in the fields of public safety, education, mental health emergency management and others) to talk quarterly about trends in and issues of school safety and local needs, and develop an annual report on such information. Appointments are expected to be announced soon.

**School Funding Proposal Expected to See Hearings This Fall**

On June 26, bipartisan duo Rep. Bob Cupp (R – Lima) and Rep. John Patterson (D – Jefferson) unveiled some changes to their proposal for a new, constitutional school funding plan in the form of an official bill, House Bill 305. Although the sponsors were hoping to have initial hearings on the bill this summer, the House Speaker wanted to wait to move on it until the fall. HB 305 has been referred to the House Finance Committee and is expected to receive hearings this fall. Passing the bill will likely be a huge undertaking, as the 6-year phase-in process for this new funding formula is expected to cost $360 million in the first year alone.

The new formula seeks to provide more equitable funding for poorer rural and urban districts that the original version. HB 305 still bases its core formula amount 60% on the district’s property value and 40% on the average resident income, but adds money for poor districts by changing what was previously a fixed local share amount to a range of 2 – 2.5% and adding a third tier of targeted assistance funding. The new bill also includes language creating several study committees that the House had included in its budget bill but the Senate had removed. HB 305 requires the following study committee reports by January 30, 2020:

- Economically disadvantaged students – *this language specifically mentions providing these students with “the emotional, social and academic services necessary to ensure adequate opportunities for success”*
- ESCs
- English language learners
- Pre school system funding and quality
- Community school funding
- Transportation of charter school students
The tweaked formula still retains in its base cost funding model a staff-to-student ratio of 250:1 for “social/emotional/security/life support” personnel. That category was intentionally kept broad to allow for local districts to retain authority over who they want to hire for the funded position, but regardless, the plan mandates that 15% of a school’s funding be dedicated to instructional and student supports, which includes this staff member.

**HB 12 – Passes House - OSCA Testifies**

House Bill 12, sponsored by Representatives Don Manning (R – New Middletown) and Thomas West (D – Canton), would create the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group. This legislation is championed by the Ohio Children’s Hospital Association. According the bill, the purpose of the Stakeholder Group is to coordinate and plan the creation of a comprehensive learning network to support young children and their families in facilitating social, emotional, and behavioral development and to seek to reduce behavioral health disparities among young children.

While under consideration in the House Health Committee, Nichole Miller (OSCA President) gave supportive testimony. The bill was favorably reported by the committee and went on to pass the full House of Representatives on June 13th by a vote of 86-3. The Senate will be reviewing a number of the House’s priority bills, including HB 12, this fall, but it is unclear how far the bill will move given other Senate priorities.

**HB 239 – Reducing High Stakes Tests**

Representatives Gayle Manning (R – North Ridgeville) and Erica Crawley (D – Columbus) have introduced legislation to reduce the number of high stakes test in schools. Under the bill, English language arts I, Geometry, American history and American government would no longer be required. The bill would also allow high school students to opt out of taking a nationally standardized college admission assessment (ACT) with parental consent.

The legislation also creates district level workgroups to study the amount of time spent on testing.

The bill has had three hearings in the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Senate President Larry Obhof has stated he is not in favor of eliminating American History and Government tests. So, should the bill pass the House, it would have a high hurdle in the Senate. The bill is supported by the Ohio Education Association and the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

**Bills Would Compensate School Staff for Out-of-Pocket Costs**

Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R – Hilliard) and Rep. Tim Schaffer (R – Lancaster) have introduced similar bills in their respective chambers that acknowledge the out-of-pocket costs teachers and school counselors so often bear to provide supplemental supplies for their students. Sen. Kunze’s bill, SB 26, which passed the Senate unanimously in May, was also in the Senate’s final version of the state budget. Unfortunately, the language was removed from the final budget bill during conference committee negotiations. SB 26 would give teachers, counselors, and other school personnel a state income tax deduction up to $250 per tax year for any unreimbursed expenses. Qualifying expenses include classroom supplies and professional development initiatives. Any amount claimed for the already existing federal deduction for these expenses would count against what can be claimed on the state level (so if a counselor has $350 in expenses and claims $250 in their federal deduction, they would only claim the remaining $100 for their Ohio deduction).

Rep. Schaffer’s bill, HB 121, applies only to teachers and limits the credit to $100 for “instructional material.” His bill allows the credit to apply to qualified home school teachers as well. Because Rep. Schaffer was recently appointed to a vacancy in the Senate, the fate of his House bill is likely bleak. We will see if the House takes up Sen. Kunze’s SB 26 this fall.
Health Education Standards Legislation

In late March, OSCA and OCA representatives were invited to meet with Sen. Vernon Sykes (D – Akron) about SB 121, bipartisan legislation he is sponsoring with Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R – Hilliard) that would require the state board of education to develop evidence-based curriculum standards for K-12 health education, leaving sex education curricula up to local school districts. Sen. Sykes has been working with interested parties for multiple General Assemblies to refine the bill’s language, ultimately coming to the conclusion that leaving sex education out of the standards would remove potential controversy and make the bill as palatable as possible for conservative Senate Leadership. The Chair of the Senate Education Committee has already expressed her support for the bill, according to Sykes. OCA and OSCA decided they are in favor of the bipartisan effort to establish a minimum standard for health education, and agreed to testify on the bill to share their perspective once hearings start.

Similar legislation in the House, HB 165, sponsored by freshman Rep. Beth Liston (D – Dublin) and Rep. Tavia Galonski (D – Akron) would also seek to create a standard for health education, but their bill requires that it be based on the most recent standards “developed by the American association for health education.”

SB 121 has had a sponsor hearing before the Senate Education Committee.

HB 165 has had 3 hearings before the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. The bill received support from the OSMA, BASA, OSBA, OFT, Ohio Society for Public Health Education, and other health experts. Several individuals came forward to oppose the legislation as well, with one stating concerns that the standards could lead to teachers stepping into the role of parents. The bill is also opposed by Ohio Advocates for Medical Freedom.

Freshman Senator Introduces Prohibition on Student Seclusion

Freshman Senator Tina Maharath (D – Columbus) has introduced SB 81 to require the state board of education to adopt rules prohibiting the use of seclusion on students. The legislation defines seclusion as a procedure that “isolates and confines a student in a separate area” or “occurs in a specifically constructed or designated room or space that is physically isolated from common areas and from which the student is prevented from leaving.” Specifically defined as not seclusion are detention, student-requested breaks and behavioral interventions that place the student in a separate room with a staff member or involve the student being in a separate room where they are not confined. SB 81 has been assigned to the Senate Education Committee but has not yet had a hearing.

Senate Legislation Funds Mental Health Staff at ESCs

Sen. Nathan Manning (R – North Ridgeville) has introduced legislation that would appropriate $5 million in additional Foundation Funding from the state’s General Revenue Fund to allow educational service centers across the state to employ “one or more social workers, mental health professionals, or behavioral health professionals.” The funding will be allocated at a rate of $3.25 per student served by that ESC. A separate provision in the bill authorizes mental health professionals certified by MHAS to provide crisis assessments to a minor at credible risk of suicide, even if the parent or guardian is unavailable to provide prior consent for the assessment. A good faith effort to notify the parent or guardian after the fact is required by the bill. Sen. Manning’s SB 126 has been assigned to the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee but has not yet received a hearing.

School Safety Legislation Clears Committee
The House Primary and Secondary Education Committee has unanimously reported HB 123, a bipartisan bill from Representatives Gayle Manning (R – North Ridgeville) and Glenn Holmes (D – McDonald) that would create a statewide standard for school safety and violence prevention training in grades 6-12. The bill is based off of model legislation from the organization Sandy Hook Promise. HB 123 would provide for standards in threat assessment team training, suicide prevention training, student safety and violence prevention training, student social inclusion training and require each district to utilize an anonymous reporting system. This legislation did not have any opponent testimony. The full House is likely to vote on the legislation this fall.

Copies of legislation – Go to www.legislature.state.oh.us

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