



THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT
2016





PRESIDENT'S LETTER

For many of us, 2016 was a year to be forgotten, thanks to the nastiest, most divisive election in our lifetimes. Sadly, the stresses and animosities of Trump versus Clinton spilled into the education debate as well, raising the temperature many degrees and at times pitting natural reform allies against one another. To make matters worse, disappointing findings from the latest PISA study came in like the polar vortex to close out the year. Good riddance to all that!



It wasn't, however, a complete waste. Real progress was made on several fronts, both nationally and in Fordham's home state of Ohio. To its credit, the outgoing Administration put the pedal to the metal in implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act. And though sometimes it seemed as if Education Secretary John King and his team were blind to that law's intent to shrink the federal role, the final accountability regulations released in November 2016 represented a reasonable compromise.

We were particularly pleased that the Department of Education heeded calls voiced by Fordham and others that states not be forced to measure academic achievement using only proficiency rates. America sorely needs to shake the No Child Left Behind—era practice of focusing only on the "bubble" kids—students just below proficiency—rather than the progress of all our children. Giving schools credit for pupil success at every level is an important step forward, especially for high-achieving low-income students.

Of course, the most impactful actions—on ESSA and everything else in K–12 education—are in the hands of the states, and we've been working hard to persuade state policymakers to take full advantage of their newfound flexibility to build accountability systems of which they can be proud. Most states have made huge strides in recent years in raising

REAL PROGRESS
WAS MADE ON SEVERAL FRONTS, BOTH NATIONALLY AND IN FORDHAM'S HOME STATE OF OHIO.

THE MOST IMPACTFUL ACTIONS—ON ESSA AND EVERYTHING ELSE IN K–12 EDUCATION—ARE IN THE HANDS OF THE STATES.

standards and adopting tougher, more honest tests—changes that have largely endured despite fracas over the Common Core and testing.

Now they need to buttress these higher expectations and better assessments (especially PARCC and Smarter Balanced, which our landmark February study found to be of exceptionally high quality) by grading schools in a fair, rigorous way. Two Fordham studies—*High Stakes for High Achievers* and *High Stakes for High Schoolers*—point the way, and we're heartened to see some states already moving in the right direction with their draft ESSA plans.

In Ohio, meanwhile, reform of the state's troubled charter school sector has continued apace. A new accountability system for charter authorizers produced its first ratings. Though that process needs considerable refining, it represented an important step toward real quality control. (Our own charter-sponsoring shop was honored to be deemed "effective," one of just five Buckeye authorizers to receive that accolade.) We're already seeing other positive outcomes from 2015's charter-reform statute, including the highest number of performance-driven school closures in years.

Looking forward, 2017 marks the twentieth anniversary of Fordham's modern incarnation as a school-reform organization. We expect the new year to bring many exciting developments and riveting debates, especially on the topic of school choice. We feel as if we've been prepping for two decades now, having demonstrated a steadfast attention to parental choice, school accountability, and federal policy. With Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, we suspect those three strands of reform are about to intersect in a big way. And we intend to be ready.

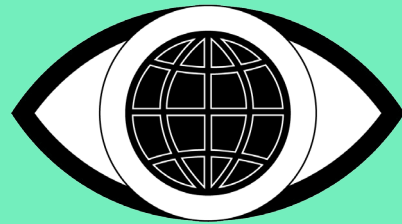
Sincerely,

2017
— MARKS THE —
20TH ANNIVERSARY OF FORDHAM'S MODERN INCARNATION AS A SCHOOL-REFORM ORGANIZATION.

20 YEARS OF IMPACT

8,500,243

PAGEVIEWS (SINCE 2006)



500

EDUCATION GADFLY SHOW
PODCAST EPISODES



750

EDITIONS OF THE
GADFLY NEWSLETTER



200+
PANELS AND
EVENTS



6,977
BLOG POSTS

44% GROWTH
IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS
SERVED SINCE 2005



PIE network
Policy Innovators
in Education



National Council on
Teacher Quality

4 ORGANIZATIONS
INCUBATED

GREAT MINDS

SETON
EDUCATION PARTNERS

253

EXTERNAL AUTHORS
AND OTHER REPORT
COLLABORATORS



13

BOOKS
PUBLISHED



256
REPORTS
AND BRIEFS

“

4,189

CITATIONS OF OUR
WORK IN SCHOLARLY
JOURNALS AND BOOKS



”

20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

1997

Founded in 1959 by Thelma Fordham Pruett in honor of her late husband, the Foundation is relaunched in its modern form following Mrs. Pruett's death. Chester E. Finn, Jr. is named its first president. Its first office opens in Washington, D.C.

Fordham publishes its first study, a review of state English language arts standards, followed by a companion review of math standards in 1998.

2000

Fordham helps seed some of the first charter schools in Dayton.

2001

Fordham launches the *Education Gadfly*, a weekly roundup of commentary, news, and analysis in the education-policy world. It quickly gains a reputation as a source of incisive commentary and lively debate.



2003

Fordham opens a Dayton office to serve as the base of its Ohio operations.

2004

The Ohio Department of Education approves Fordham to sponsor charter schools, making it one of the first nonprofits in Ohio to take on the responsibility of authorizing these independent public schools.

2005

Fordham releases another round of reviews on state standards. In both math and English, it finds that states continued to hold students to weak and imprecise standards—a problem that No Child Left Behind might have made worse.

2006

Fordham's state-level policy work moves to Columbus, while its charter-authorizing shop remains in its hometown of Dayton.

Fordham begins its weekly podcast, the *Education Gadfly Show*, originally hosted by Mike Petrilli and AEI's Rick Hess. Over the next decade, it becomes a go-to source for in-depth discussion.



2007

The Foundation is joined by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a public charity, which is now the face of nearly all Fordham's work.



2008

Fordham publishes *High Achieving Students in the Era of No Child Left Behind*, which marks the beginning of its scholarship examining educational opportunities for this country's most promising students.

2009

Fordham and then-Executive Vice President Michael J. Petrilli join Twitter. Currently, Fordham reaches an audience of 40,000+ through the platform.

2011

Columbus Collegiate Academy, a Fordham-authorized charter school, is awarded the Gold-Gain EPIC award by New Leaders for New Schools for dramatic gains in student achievement (one of only four charter schools in the country to receive that accolade).

2014

Mike takes the reins as Fordham's second president. Checker remains with the organization as a distinguished senior fellow.

2015

Ohio lawmakers pass—and Governor John Kasich signs—House Bill 2, the most consequential reform measure in the history of the Buckeye State's troubled charter sector, enacted partially in response to two revealing Fordham studies of school performance and policy shortcomings.

2016

Fordham releases *Evaluating the Content and Quality of Next-Generation Assessments* and *Charter Schools at the Crossroads*, two seminal works on our key issues.





OUR MISSION

THE PROBLEM

Our great nation needs—and deserves—great schools for all its children. That's particularly true today, when a strong education is a precondition for economic success.

Yet too many American children receive a mediocre or worse education because too many of our schools and school systems are complacent or dysfunctional. This situation is most dire for our neediest students, who generally lack high-quality education options. But almost everyone could be learning much more than they are today. As a result, American teenagers trail our international competitors, and many emerge from our K–12 system ill prepared for what comes next. Our lackluster schools are one major reason that upward mobility in America has stalled, that economic vitality is in jeopardy, and that our culture is coarse and fragmented. Just as importantly, our schools are failing to prepare tomorrow's citizens for successful, informed self-governance in a thriving democracy.

We've seen modest progress in academic outcomes since the U.S. was declared a "nation at risk" in 1983, evidence that broad-scale reforms can and do make a difference. Still, we have a long way to go to create an education system worthy of the nation we want to be.



**DAYTON INDUSTRIALIST
THOMAS B. FORDHAM,
WHO PASSED AWAY IN
1948, IS THE NAMESAKE OF
BOTH THE FOUNDATION
AND THE INSTITUTE.**

THE FORDHAM INSTITUTE'S MISSION

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute and its affiliated Foundation promote educational excellence for every child in America via quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as advocacy and charter school authorizing in Ohio.

WE ADVANCE

- High standards, strong assessments of student learning, and common-sense accountability for schools and children across the achievement spectrum;
- Quality education options and high-quality school-performance information for every family; and
- A student-centered system that provides clear pathways to upward mobility, good citizenship, and successful participation in adult society.

WE PROMOTE EDUCATION REFORM BY

- Producing relevant, rigorous policy research and analysis;
- Providing "thought leadership" to policy makers, philanthropists, advocacy groups, and others through timely and persuasive commentary;
- Advocating sound education policies in Ohio related to standards, assessments, school choice, and other promising reforms;
- Serving as a model charter school authorizer and sharing our lessons throughout and beyond Ohio; and
- Incubating new ideas, innovations, organizations, school models, and visionary leaders to advance education excellence.

OUR IMPACT IN 2016



1,214,443
PAGEVIEWS

20

NATIONAL
REPORTS
AND BRIEFS



51

EDITIONS OF THE
EDUCATION
GADFLY WEEKLY



4,166
TWEETS



OHIO
REPORTS
AND BRIEFS

9



EDITIONS OF THE
OHIO GADFLY

24

3,940
STUDENTS
IN OHIO CHARTER
SCHOOLS WE SPONSOR



TOP 10 BLOG POSTS OF 2016

PRESIDENT-ELECT DONALD TRUMP QUOTES ABOUT EDUCATION

– By Brandon Wright

THE LEFT'S DRIVE TO PUSH CONSERVATIVES OUT OF EDUCATION REFORM

– By Robert Pondiscio

HILLARY CLINTON QUOTES ABOUT EDUCATION

– By Brandon Wright

BETSY DEVOS QUOTES ABOUT EDUCATION

– By Brandon Wright

20 QUESTIONS FOR BETSY DEVOS

– By Michael Petrilli

FAILING BY DESIGN: HOW WE MAKE TEACHING TOO HARD FOR MERE MORTALS

– By Robert Pondiscio

THE PHONIEST STATISTIC IN EDUCATION

– By Robert Pondiscio

SOME GREAT IDEAS FROM OUR ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN COMPETITION

– By Michael Petrilli

"WHY DO I HAVE TO EXPLAIN MY ANSWER?"

ADVICE FOR PARENTS IN THE AGE OF COMMON CORE

– By Michael Petrilli

NOW WHAT?

– By Michael Petrilli

99

RADIO INTERVIEWS

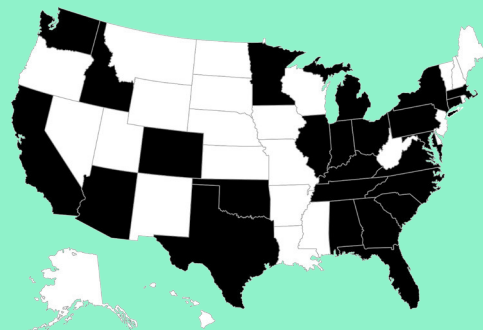


92

SPEAKING
ENGAGEMENTS

25

STATES VISITED
FOR PANELS
AND POLICY



670

BLOG POSTS



101

OP-EDS

2016 IN REVIEW

JANUARY

January 27: Fordham-Ohio hosts a release event to discuss the findings from *Quality in Adversity: Lessons from Ohio's best charter schools*, a survey of leaders from the top-performing Buckeye charters.



APRIL

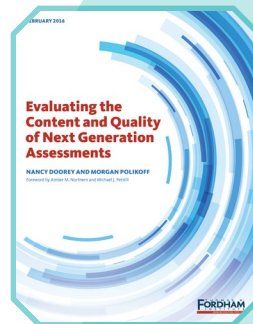
April 7: Fordham releases *Career and Technical Education in High School: Does It Improve Student Outcomes?* and receives writeups in the *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Seventy Four*, and *Education Week*.

April 26: In partnership with the Center for Reinventing Public Education, we create "A Policymaker's Guide to Improving School Leadership" to help policymakers and advocates focus on recruiting and developing great principals.

FEBRUARY

February 2: Fordham hosts the first-ever ESSA accountability system "design competition" to offer new ways of thinking about accountability in schools.

February 11: Fordham releases and discusses the findings of *Evaluating the Content and Quality of Next Generation Assessments*, which examines actual items from three multistate tests (ACT Aspire, PARCC, and Smarter Balanced) and one best-in-class state assessment, Massachusetts's state exam (MCAS).

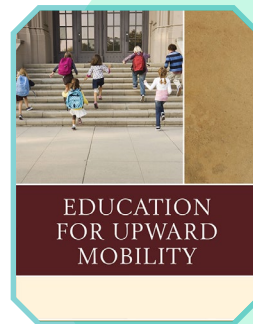


MAY

May 25: Senior fellow Robert Pondiscio writes a thought-provoking post on the Flypaper blog titled "The Left's drive to push conservatives out of education reform," sparking months of discussion within the reform movement.

MARCH

March 15: In *Education for Upward Mobility*, Mike and more than a dozen leading scholars and policy analysts seek to determine how best our schools can help students born into poverty to transcend their disadvantages and enter the middle class as adults.



JUNE

June 23: Fordham releases *Common Core Math in the K-8 Classroom: Results from a National Teacher Survey*.

June 20: We host a webinar entitled "Ed Reform's Common Ground" to discuss schisms in the opinions of ed reformers—as well as how we might be able to come back together again.

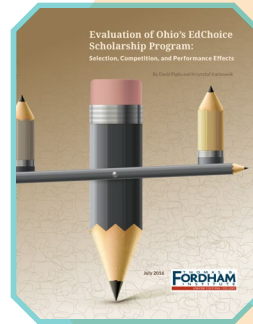


2016 IN REVIEW

JULY

July 7: We publish *Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects*.

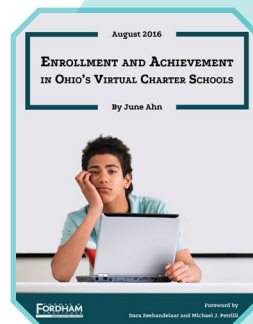
July 14: Fordham hosts the event "Teachers Like Common Core Math. Why Don't Parents?" to discuss how policymakers can support parents and children during Common Core implementation.



AUGUST

August 2: Fordham releases *Enrollment and Achievement in Ohio's Virtual Charter Schools*, exploring one of the most promising—and contentious—issues in education today.

August 2: Checker writes an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan in *Education Next*, which is then reprinted in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, offering some unsolicited advice regarding philanthropy and education.

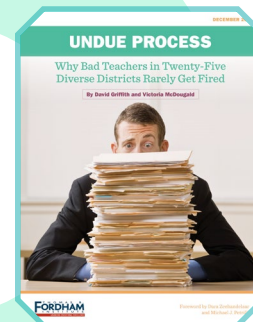
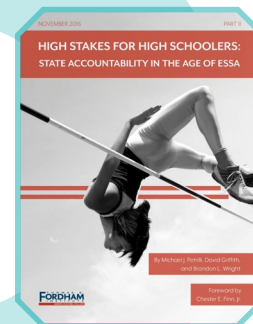


SEPTEMBER

September 5: In anticipation of the release of their new book during the twenty-fifth anniversary of charter schools, Checker, Bruno, and Brandon pen an op-ed that is published in the Wall Street Journal titled, "Charter Schools Are Reinventing Local Control in Education."

September 6: Mike pens an op-ed featured in the *Washington Post* titled, "To improve education, focus on excellence—not failure."

September 29: Fordham publishes *Charter School Boards in the Nation's Capital*, which explores the relationship between charter boards and school quality.



OCTOBER

October 25: Checker, Bruno, and Brandon publish *Charter Schools at the Crossroads: Predicaments, Paradoxes, Possibilities*, examining the tremendous work accomplished by the charter sector, but also how much remains to be done.

NOVEMBER

November 9: After the divisive election, Mike publishes "Now What?," a look at how the education-reform movement can move forward.

November 14: Mike speaks about the themes and ideas from his book, *Education for Upward Mobility*, as part of the Gutman Library Distinguished Author Series at Harvard.

November 15: Fordham releases the companion paper to its research on how state accountability systems serve high-achieving students: *High Stakes for High Schoolers: State Accountability in the Age of ESSA, Part II*.

DECEMBER

December 5: Checker Finn is elected vice president of the Maryland State Board of Education.

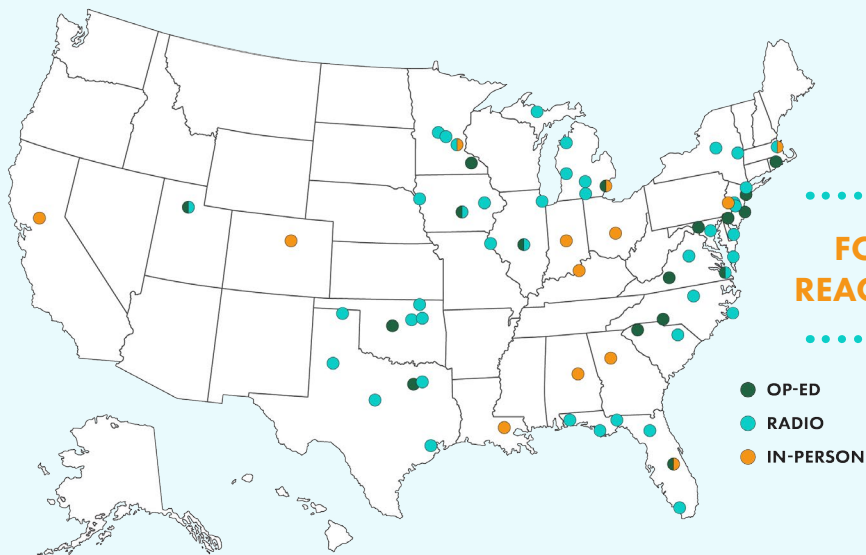
December 8: Fordham publishes *Undue Process: Why Bad Teachers in Twenty-Five Diverse Districts Rarely Get Fired*.

EMPOWERING STATES THROUGH ESSA

Almost as soon as the ink dried on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—now dubbed the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA—we leaped to action to help states understand the new law and leverage it to meet their students' needs. At February's "ESSA Accountability Design Competition," we provided state leaders with concrete, practical advice for crafting comprehensive and rigorous accountability systems. Many of our suggestions—such as allowing states to measure academic achievement at multiple levels instead of just proficiency—made their way into the U.S. Department of Education's final accountability regulations and are gaining wide credence among state policymakers.



Lydia Burns and Jamie Smith, from the Pritchard Committee Student Voice team in Kentucky, present at the ESSA design competition.



In the fall, Fordham published two blockbuster reviews of states' current (or planned) accountability plans and the extent to which they fostered achievement by all students, including high achievers. We found, sadly, that most plans missed the mark—and offered recommendations for states to aim better as they move forward.

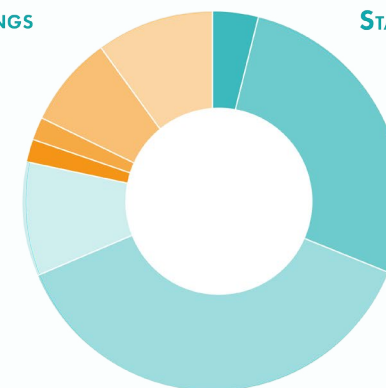
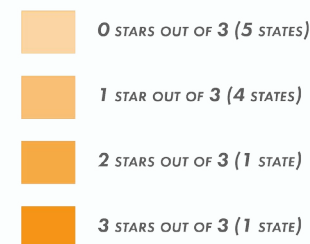
States can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of their high achievers are prioritized under ESSA in their K–8 systems:

- ★ **REWARD** schools for getting more students to an "advanced" level.
- ★ **RATE** schools using a true growth model that measures the progress of all students, not just those who are low-performing or below the "proficient" line.
- ★ **INCLUDE** "gifted" (or "high-achieving") students as a subgroup, and report their results separately.
- ★ **MAKE** growth for all students count for at least half of a school's summative rating.

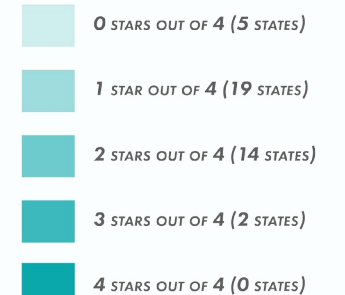


RESULTS FOR K–8 ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS NATIONWIDE

STATES WITH SUMMATIVE RATINGS



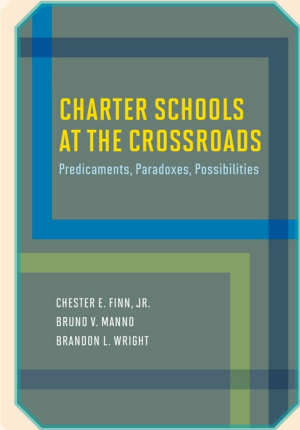
STATES WITHOUT SUMMATIVE RATINGS



LEADING THE MOVEMENT FOR CHARTERS & CHOICE

Fordham has been at the forefront of innovation in school choice since its modern inception, and 2016 was no different. We published studies of several facets of school choice, including virtual schools (*Enrollment and Achievement in Ohio's Virtual Schools*), vouchers (*Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects*), and the composition and impact of charters' governing boards (*Charter Schools in the Nation's Capital*).

Perhaps our largest contribution this year was the publication (by Harvard Education Press) of *Charter Schools at the Crossroads: Predicaments, Paradoxes, Possibilities*. Written by Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno Manno, and Brandon Wright, this landmark book takes stock of the first twenty-five years of the charter movement and sets forth a bold vision for its future. In support of the book, the authors spoke to audiences at conferences hosted by the Foundation for Excellence in Education, the Philanthropy Roundtable, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the Policy Innovators in Education Network, and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, among others.



Checker speaks with Richard Whitmire, author of *The Founders*, at the October 12 event "Charter Schools at Twenty-Five: Humdrum or Revolutionary?"

WEIGHING IN ON FEDERAL POLICY

In November, then President-elect Donald Trump nominated Betsy DeVos, a longtime and tireless advocate for children and for school choice, to serve as Secretary of Education. Mike applauded the pick and offered senators and journalists a score of questions they might ask Mrs. DeVos at her confirmation hearings. Those questions included the following:

- Federal involvement nearly killed the Common Core State Standards. Are you worried that federal involvement could do the same to school choice?
- Do you think test scores are important indicators of student success?
- Is "college for all" the right goal and, to the extent that it isn't, what would be?

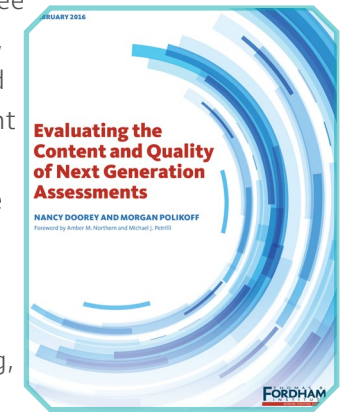
“**25 YEARS** FROM ITS BEGINNINGS, CHARTERING PORTENDS
PROFOUND CHANGES
 IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION
 THAT'S WHY THE BATTLES AROUND IT ARE ABOUT MORE THAN
MARKET SHARE TEST SCORES AND DISCIPLINE CODES.
THEY'RE PROXIES FOR WHAT'S REALLY IN DISPUTE:
POWER & CONTROL
 OVER A K-12 EDUCATION BEHEMOTH THAT SPENDS MORE THAN
\$600 BILLION A YEAR AND EMPLOYS 6 MILLION ADULTS.”

– Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno Manno, and Brandon Wright, *Wall Street Journal*

ASSESSING OUR NATION'S TESTS AND CURRICULA

Since our maiden review of state English standards in 1997, we've been vigilant about ensuring that students are held to a high bar in classrooms across the country. We continued this in 2016 with our most ambitious report to date, *Evaluating the Content and Quality of Next Generation Assessments*, which appraised several of the new, multistate testing programs that accompany today's more rigorous academic standards, including the Common Core. With more than fifty media hits and ten speaking engagements (so far), the report has already influenced state policy decisions and district-level practice.

In this unprecedented look under the hood of three next-generation assessments (ACT Aspire, PARCC, and Smarter Balanced), as well as a well-regarded state test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), thirty-two expert reviewers evaluated actual test questions. They gauged how well summative assessments in the fifth and eighth grades (capstone grades in elementary and middle school, respectively) emphasized the most important curricular content; whether they required a range of cognitively demanding, high-quality items that made use of various item types; and summarized the assessments' overall strengths and weaknesses.



CURRICULUM TOOLS FOR ELA CLASSROOMS

Save time & improve your teaching

Tools that can help your students:

- Develop vocabulary
- Build background knowledge
- Improve reading comprehension
- Exercise close reading
- Practice writing skills
- Write argumentative essays

Award-winning teachers reviewed nine promising online resources to save you time!

In depth reviews of Newsela, ReadWorks, Quill & other Common Core aligned tools!

FORDHAM INSTITUTE

HELPING TEACHERS IMPLEMENT RIGOROUS MATH AND ELA STANDARDS

High-quality assessments signal what content is important, but whether a child succeeds depends largely on what happens in the classroom. This summer, we published results from a survey of math teachers to better understand how educators are implementing Common Core standards across the country. We found that teachers know what's in the standards, are teaching that content at the appropriate grade levels, and are changing some of their teaching practices. They also like the Common Core standards, though they don't think parents are equally enamored. In particular, 85 percent of educators believe that "reinforcement of math learning at home is declining because parents don't understand the way that math is being taught." Then, in the fall, "The Right Tool for the Job" series examined a few of the most promising curriculum tools available to English language arts teachers.

	ACT ASPIRE	MCAS	PARCC	SMARTER BALANCED
ELA/LITERACY CONTENT	LIMITED/UNEVEN MATCH	LIMITED/UNEVEN MATCH	EXCELLENT MATCH	EXCELLENT MATCH
ELA/LITERACY DEPTH	GOOD MATCH	GOOD MATCH	EXCELLENT MATCH	GOOD MATCH
MATHEMATICS CONTENT	LIMITED/UNEVEN MATCH	LIMITED/UNEVEN MATCH	GOOD MATCH	GOOD MATCH
MATHEMATICS DEPTH	GOOD MATCH	EXCELLENT MATCH	GOOD MATCH	GOOD MATCH

Though ratings varied by subject and grade, overall we found that all four tests did well regarding the quality of their items and the depth of knowledge assessed. But ACT Aspire and MCAS did not adequately assess—in some cases did not assess at all—some of the priority content in both ELA/literacy and mathematics at one or both grade levels included in the study.



EXPANDING THE UNIVERSE OF EDUCATION REFORM

Standards and school choice have been long-standing interests of Fordham's, but we know these two reform strategies alone cannot fix American education. Over the past twenty years, we've explored other vital issues, including career and technical education, gifted education, and the role that education plays in upward mobility. In 2016, we made significant progress on all these fronts.

For nearly a decade we've advocated for a frame of excellence in our education policy. In 2016, we furthered the conversation we started with our 2015 book *Failing Our Brightest Kids* by starting "The High Flyer" blog with the National Association for Gifted Children. Here we convene conversations about how to serve high-ability students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds.

Tennessee SCORE hosted Mike this spring to talk about his book, *Education for Upward Mobility*.



Issues of class and poverty loomed large in the 2016 presidential election. Presaging this debate, Mike published *Education for Upward Mobility* in March, an edited volume offering policy ideas to help poor and working class kids climb the ladder of mobility. He presented his findings on a nationwide book tour, which included stops in Indianapolis, Toledo, Denver, Nashville, and Boston.

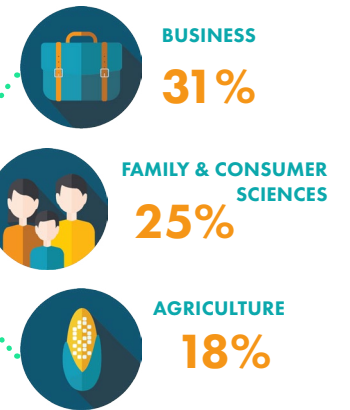
His three main policy recommendations are as follows:

- 1 Employ career and technical education as a path to the middle class;
- 2 Remember the strivers—high-achieving, low-income students, often overlooked in high-needs schools; and
- 3 Teach the success sequence—finish high school, receive postsecondary training, and wait to start a family



In recent years, Fordham has stressed that reformers should not ignore the "career" half of college and career readiness. In *Career and Technical Education in High School: Does it improve student outcomes?* we probed longitudinal data from Arkansas to better understand the extent and impact of CTE coursework.

1 ROUGHLY THREE-QUARTERS OF STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO CONCENTRATE DO SO IN ONE OF THREE PROGRAMS OF STUDY:



2 SPECIFIC TYPES OF STUDENTS CAN BENEFIT FROM CTE COURSEWORK AND CONCENTRATION:



3 STUDENTS WHO CONCENTRATE IN A SINGLE PROGRAM OF STUDY ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

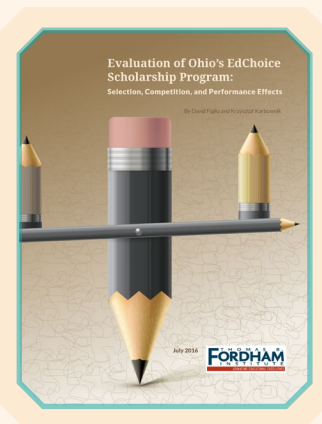
GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL, ENROLL IN A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE, BE EMPLOYED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, AND EARN MORE IN THE YEAR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.



IMPROVING OHIO'S CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR

After landmark 2015 legislation raised the bar for charter quality in Ohio, we spent much of 2016 enacting change on the ground. This included supporting effective implementation of House Bill 2, providing commentary on the continuing need for high-quality charter schools, and reminding Ohioans of the incredible difference that great charter schools can make in helping children to succeed. We're proud of our continuing effort to provide more kids in our home state with more high-quality education options.

In July, Fordham Columbus released *Evaluation of the EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects*, a robust evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice voucher program, which is used by more than 18,000 youngsters across the Buckeye State. We found that the competition associated with the introduction of EdChoice appears to spur public-school improvements, but students who used vouchers to attend private schools lost ground. The results, unveiled at the City Club in Cleveland, generated widespread coverage in media outlets across the state.



(David Figlio / Photo by Donn R. Nottage)

In the *Ohio Gadfly*, we regularly weigh in on issues of importance in the Buckeye State. In his May post, vice president for Ohio policy and advocacy Chad Aldis flagged a critical issue in the charter school community.

Charter critics undoubtedly see the most recent struggles of online charter schools as an Achilles' heel for the fast-growing charter sector. They're right, but online charters aren't going away—and they shouldn't. Online education isn't yet producing the overall results that it needs to, but it can't be overlooked that around forty thousand Ohio families have chosen an online school for their children's education. For many areas of the state, it's still the only meaningful form of school choice if the assigned district school isn't meeting a student's needs.

Figuring it out for the whole sector, though, is going to involve some difficult decisions on a host of topics that are critical to developing this model of education. Not only do charter school advocates need to be involved in those conversations, but we need to lead them. If we don't step up and use our expertise to offer solutions, we run the very real risk that opponents of choice—those who don't believe in a parent's inherent right to choose—will do it for us. These aren't easy issues, but until they are solved, the reputation of Ohio charter schools and the education outcomes for more than forty thousand online students could suffer. For Buckeye State charter school advocates, more work remains.



The first ratings from Ohio's new, more rigorous authorizer evaluation system were released in 2016. Just five authorizers were rated effective and were allowed to open new schools in the fall of 2016. Twenty-one others were rated poor and will have their authorizing rights revoked, and 39 were rated ineffective and put on corrective action plans.

— "VIRTUAL SCHOOLS MEAN REAL WORK FOR CHARTER SUPPORTERS," MAY 2, 2016



AUTHORIZING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

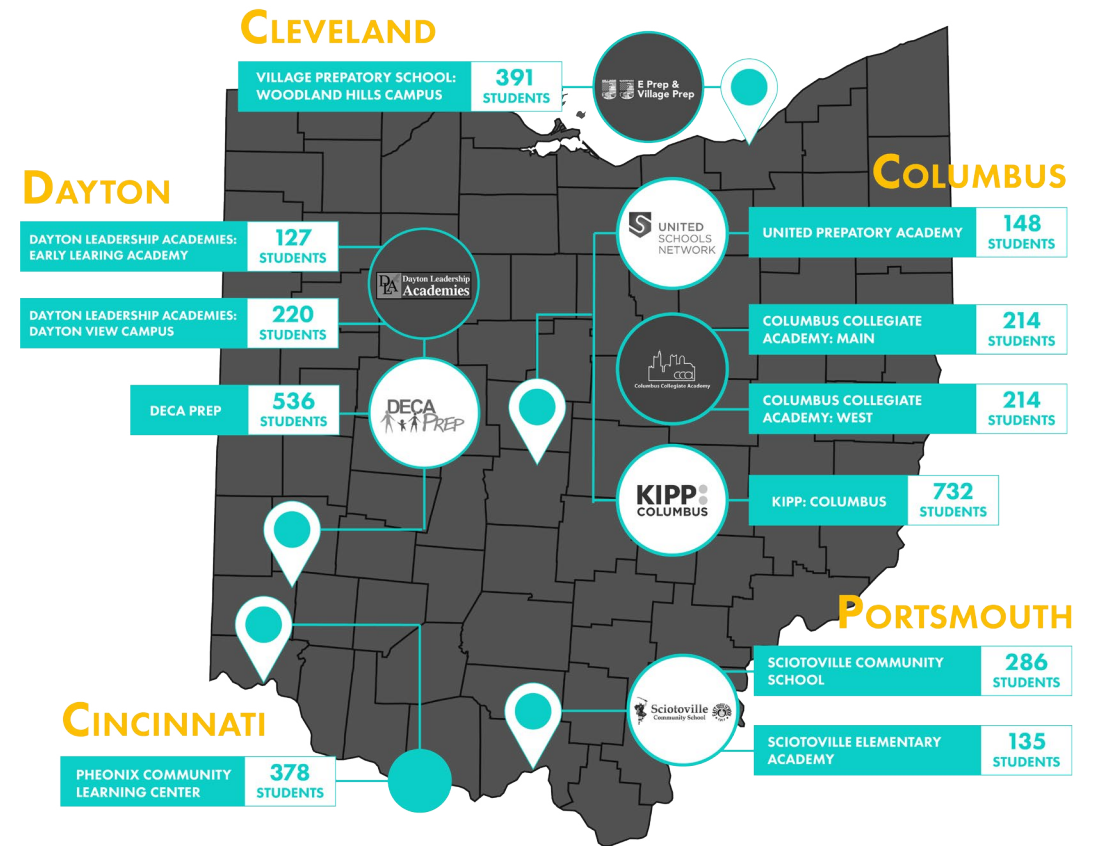
Our charter-authorizing team, based in Dayton, currently partners with eleven schools serving more than 3,900 students. These include some of Ohio's top-performing schools—and some others that are still struggling to produce the kinds of results that we expect. We're committed to seeing that students in schools that we authorize receive a top-notch education, and we strive to develop and model best practices for authorizers across the nation.

In 2016, we were one of just five authorizers (in a state with sixty-five of them) to be rated effective by the Ohio Department of Education.

We pledge autonomy, integrity, engagement, transparency, and high standards to the schools that we serve.



SCHOOLS AUTHORIZED IN THE 2016 SCHOOL YEAR



We also received twelve out of twelve on the National Association of Charter School authorizers 2016 Index of Essential Practices. The Index analyzes the degree to which individual authorizers are implementing key practices that are critical to quality charter school authorizing. The practices include:

- Mission
- Staff
- Contracts
- Application criteria
- Application timeline
- Application interview
- External expert panel
- 5-year term length
- Financial audit
- Renewal criteria
- Revocation criteria
- Annual report

LEADING THE FIELD IN POLICY AND REFORM

Fordham's position—in the center right of education reform, with a deep connection to state- and city-level reforms as well as national policy—makes us uniquely qualified to build bridges and lead the sector forward. We've incubated or advised multiple organizations, and we continue to impact and inform the sector.

ENGAGING EXCELLENCE

We aim to produce rigorous, highly relevant policy studies, and we enjoyed much success on this front in 2016. Our studies were cited 228 times in the last year in other publications and academic journals. Our prominence is further reflected—and enhanced—in the company we keep: We partner with leading scholars at institutions such as Harvard, Northwestern, and the University of Southern California to examine today's most pressing policy-relevant research questions.

This past year, for instance, we collaborated with Shaun Dougherty, Michael Gottfried, Matthew Steinberg, David Stuit, and Deven Carlson—members of our EEPS initiative—and twelve of our recent research partners were named to Rick Hess's annual ranking of preeminent education scholars.



Shaun Dougherty (left) and Morgan Polikoff (above) present their research findings at Fordham.



Emerging Education Policy Scholars: Fordham runs this human-capital initiative, now working with its sixth cohort, jointly with the American Enterprise Institute. We bring some of the best and brightest newly minted PhDs to Washington to gain a deeper understanding of the intersection between research and policy.

Policy Innovators in Education (PIE) Network: Fordham helped launch this network of state-level education-reform organizations in 2007 and serves as a national policy partner for its members. We help to boost their capacity, particularly around school choice, standards, and assessments.



Education Cities: We serve as a national policy partner for this coalition of city-level reform organizations and work closely with them on charter authorization, communications, and governance reform.

EdReform101: This MOOC, geared toward new reformers, operated in 2015 and again in 2016 via a partnership with 50CAN. It offers an introduction to education policy taught by some of the most prominent luminaries in the field.



Fordham alumni/ae: We also have a knack for hiring and cultivating talent internally. Former Fordham staff have taken leadership roles in federal and state governments, education-reform organizations, charter schools, and urban districts.



SENIOR STAFF & BOARD



MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

President



CHAD L. ALDIS

Vice President for Ohio Policy & Advocacy



GARY LABELLE

Vice President for Finance & Operations



KATHRYN MULLEN-UPTON

Vice President for Sponsorship & Dayton Initiatives



AMBER M. NORTHERN

Senior Vice President for Research



ALYSSA SCHWENK

Director of External Relations



DAVID P. DRISCOLL

Chairman & Former Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts



STEPHEN D. DACKIN

Superintendent of School and Community Partnerships, Columbus State Community College



CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

Distinguished Senior Fellow and President Emeritus, Thomas B. Fordham Institute



THOMAS A. HOLTON

Counsel to the Firm, Porter Wright Morris & Arthur



MICHAEL W. KELLY

President and CEO, Central Park Credit Bank



ROD PAIGE

Former U.S. Secretary of Education



STEFANIE SANFORD

Chief of Policy, Advocacy, and Government Relations, College Board

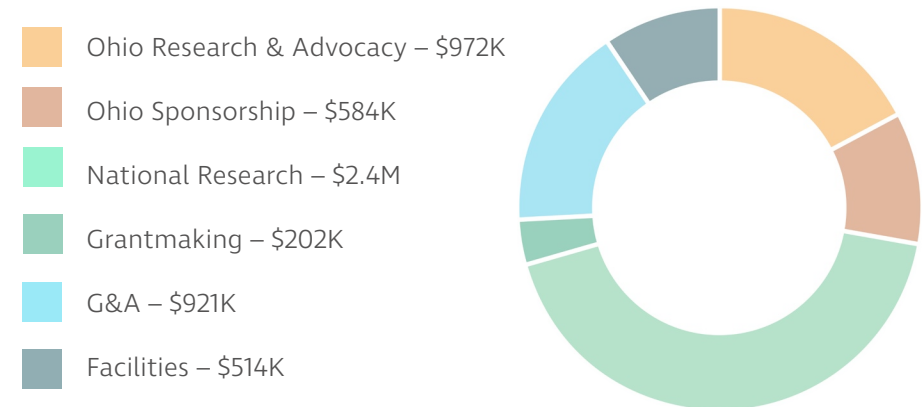


CAPRICE YOUNG

CEO, Magnolia Schools

FINANCES IN BRIEF

Fordham's spending for 2016 was \$5.6 million dollars and is projected to be about \$6.5 million in 2017. Of that, around one-third will be supported by our endowment, and the remainder will be raised from private donors. Our charter-sponsorship work is primarily funded by school fees.



ISN'T FORDHAM ALSO A FOUNDATION? DOES IT MAKE GRANTS?

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a "Type I supporting organization," controlled by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. These sister organizations are both tax-exempt public charities under section 501(c)3 of the tax code. Today, most of our work is conducted under the Institute name, ordinarily with partial funding from the Foundation's endowment (which is approximately \$53 million).

Fordham does make a few grants each year, but these are targeted and small. Many go toward our on-the-ground work in Ohio, where we play an active role in the state's education landscape. Recent grantees include DECA Prep, School Choice Ohio, Teach for America—Southwest Ohio, College Promise, Learn to Earn/Ready Set Soar, and the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio.

Fordham is audited annually by Lane & Company in Washington, D.C. Copies of our audited financial statements are available upon request. Fordham's IRS Form 990s are also available by request or online at www.guidestar.org.

**FORDHAM IS GRATEFUL FOR THE
SUPPORT OF OUR PARTNERS,
WITHOUT WHOM ACHIEVING
OUR MISSION WOULD BE
IMPOSSIBLE.**

DAYTON OFFICE

15 W 4TH STREET, SUITE 430
DAYTON, OH 45402
937.227.3368

	AMERICA ACHIEVES	AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN GROWTH FUND	THE ACHELIS AND BODMAN FOUNDATIONS	
LAURA AND JOHN ARNOLD FOUNDATION	BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES	THE LYNDE AND HARRY BRADLEY FOUNDATION	THE ELI AND EDYTHE BROAD FOUNDATION	BROOKHILL INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS
THE LOUIS CALDER FOUNDATION	CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK	COLLABORATIVE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS	THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION	THE MICHAEL & SUSAN DELL FOUNDATION
DEMOCRATS FOR EDUCATION REFORM	EXXON MOBIL FOUNDATION	BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION	THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION	THE HOOVER INSTITUTION
THE LEONA AND HARRY B. HELMSLEY CHARITABLE TRUST	THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION	HOUSTON ENDOWMENT	HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT	JACK KENT COOKE FOUNDATION
THE JOYCE FOUNDATION	EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION	THE KERN FAMILY FOUNDATION	THE KOVNER FOUNDATION	THE EDWARD A. AND CATHERINE L. LOZICK FOUNDATION
THE LYNCH FOUNDATION	NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS	THE NORD FAMILY FOUNDATION	NORDSON FOUNDATION	ONE8 FOUNDATION
OVERDECK FAMILY FOUNDATION	THE RANDOLPH FOUNDATION	THE CHARLES AND LYNN SCHUSTERMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION	CHARLES AND HELEN SCHWAB FOUNDATION	THE SEARLE FREEDOM TRUST
	THE WILLIAM E. SIMON FOUNDATION	SMITH RICHARDSON FOUNDATION	THE WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION	

COLUMBUS OFFICE

100 E. BROAD STREET, SUITE 2430
COLUMBUS, OH 43215
614.223.1580

CONTACT US

1016 16TH ST NW, 8TH FLOOR

WASHINGTON, DC 20036

202.223.5452

THEGADFLY@EDEXCELLENCE.NET