



**Half empty
or
half full?**

MAY 2013

SUPERINTENDENTS' VIEWS ON OHIO'S EDUCATION REFORMS

FDR GROUP
When Research Matters.

**THOMAS B.
FORDHAM**
INSTITUTE
ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?
SUPERINTENDENTS' VIEWS ON OHIO'S EDUCATION REFORMS

FOREWORD BY CHESTER E. FINN, JR. AND TERRY RYAN

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY FDR GROUP

MAY 2013

FDR GROUP
When Research Matters.

FORDHAM
INSTITUTE
ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The **Thomas B. Fordham Institute** is the nation's leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio. It is affiliated with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and this publication is a joint publication of the Foundation and the Institute. For further information, please visit our website at www.edexcellence.net or write to the Institute at 37 W. Broad St, Suite 400, Columbus, OH 43215. The Institute is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

CONTENTS

1. Foreword	5
2. Executive Summary	8
3. Introduction	11
4. Standards and Accountability	
A. Policy #1: Common Core State Standards	13
B. Policy #2: Teacher Evaluations	15
C. Policy #3: Third Grade Reading Guarantee	17
D. Policy #4: Publicized School and District Ratings	20
5. School Choice	
A. Policy #5: Open Enrollment	21
B. Policy #6: Individualized Instruction	22
C. Policy #7: Charter Schools and Vouchers	22
6. The Politics of Reform	24
7. Conclusion	28
8. Appendices	30

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We'd like to thank Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett, the research team who comprise the FDR Group, for this exemplary piece of work. Special thanks also goes to Kirk Hamilton, Jerry Klenke, and Denise Hall at the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Without the help and support of Dr. Hamilton and his team at BASA this project would not have been possible. They were instrumental in helping us contact superintendents for two pre-survey focus groups and in fielding the survey by email. Finally, we thank all the Ohio superintendents who participated in the focus groups and took the survey—and for the work they do daily on behalf of the children of Ohio. The project was made possible through the generosity of The Nord Family Foundation.

Terry Ryan, Emmy Partin, Aaron Churchill
Thomas B. Fordham Institute
Columbus, Ohio
May 2013

FOREWORD

Ohio, like the rest of the country, has been reforming its schools for the better part of 30 years. To date, the Buckeye State has seriously engaged such profound changes as standards-based reform, school and district report cards, school choice in diverse forms (including both charters and vouchers), changes in teacher education and licensure, online learning, credit flexibility, and many other systemic reforms. Recent additions include adoption of the Common Core standards in English language arts and math, enactment of a Third Grade Reading Guarantee, acceptance of Teach For America, and the decision to rate teachers along tiers of effectiveness (with pay and retention tied to these ratings).

Behind all of this reforming lies the candid realization that student achievement in Ohio is not where it needs to be. In 2011, for example, only 37 percent of the state's eighth graders were proficient in reading while just 39 percent were considered proficient in math according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The Ohio Board of Regents reports that 40 percent of entering college freshmen must take a remedial (non-credit bearing) math or English course, while the Ohio Department of Education notes that 20 percent of third graders failed the state reading exam (although passing it requires getting fewer than half the questions right). Finally, ACT reports that just 28 percent of Ohio high schoolers who took the ACT met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores in English, math, reading, and science.

These are bleak statistics, and they don't even take into account the staggering achievement gaps that persist among racial and socioeconomic groups in the Buckeye State, much less a dropout rate that causes an immense waste of human potential.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute has long believed that Ohio, and indeed the nation, can't afford not to embrace bold school reforms if only because the current arrangements fail too many of our kids. But we have also come to appreciate that state policy changes and budgetary

manipulations alone will not drive student gains. State leaders can help set the conditions for improvement (or, if done poorly, get in the way of needed change), but any real gains to Ohio's school and student performance will be primarily the result of the work done by district leaders, school principals, and teachers.

It is these professionals in the field that do the heavy lifting, the day-to-day work of instruction and school operation. They, along with students and families, ultimately hold the key to bringing Ohio education into the twenty-first century.

In order to understand how well the state's local education leaders are actually embracing and implementing Ohio's current school reform efforts (many of which Fordham favors—and have been shown elsewhere to work), we undertook a careful survey of district leaders. This is the second such survey of their attitudes towards school reforms.

What the analysts uncovered is a classic case of a big glass that's either half empty or half full, depending on one's school-reform disposition.

In March 2011, we released *Yearning to Break Free: Ohio Superintendents Speak Out*. That survey demonstrated that district education leaders were generally reform-minded when it came to issues related to collective bargaining and reducing mandates and burdens on schools and districts. For example, 73 percent of superintendents surveyed in 2011 supported the repeal of the provision that “mandates automatic step increases in teacher salaries.” Two-thirds supported repealing the provision in state law that “required a last-in, first-out approach to layoffs.” Further, we learned, 82 percent supported policies allowing them to combine state revenue streams while giving them more flexibility over how to spend money.

We were pleasantly surprised by how reform-minded many Ohio's superintendents were, at least when it came to issues of managing their personnel and their resources. We argued at the time that, "While many teachers and other school employees resist changes to collective bargaining laws and education reform measures, superintendents recognize the need for such changes and in fact are hungry for them." (We also noted, however, that superintendents appear notably more bullish about such changes when they are afforded the anonymity of a survey such as this.)

Two years later, much more policy water has passed over Ohio's education dam and it was time to find out whether the state's local superintendents are swimming or flailing (or worse) amid these churning conditions. Specifically, we wanted to know how they have been managing seven big reforms: 1) Common Core State Standards, 2) Teacher Evaluations; 3) Third Grade Reading Guarantee; 4) A-F School Ratings; 5) Open Enrollment; 6) Blended Learning Opportunities; and 7) School Choice (charters and vouchers).

As in 2011, we again enlisted the expert assistance of the FDR Group, a respected nonpartisan survey research firm led by veteran public opinion analysts Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett. What the analysts uncovered is a classic case of a big glass that's either half empty or half full, depending on one's school-reform disposition.

81 percent of the state's superintendents believe that the Common Core "will be widely and routinely in use in Ohio" five years hence.

One could argue it's half full because Ohio superintendents not only support the state's adoption and implementation of the Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics, but many of them also believe that these new expectations for student learning will lead to "fundamental improvement" in Ohio's schools. Even more encouraging, despite whopping implementation challenges (especially as it relates to the development and use of new assessments), 81 percent of the state's superintendents believe that the Common Core "will be widely and routinely in use in Ohio" five years hence.

This support from district leaders is a powerful antidote to unremitting assaults on these rigorous new standards from tea-party politicians, stick-in-the-muds, and some nervous educators. Indeed, it's a finding that supporters of the Common Core in the statehouse and on the state board of education should welcome as they battle to preserve the Common Core and adequately provide for implementation.

This year's survey yielded other encouraging findings on the school-reform front, including more support than we might have expected for new teacher evaluations (despite serious worries about their implementation) and widening appreciation of the potential of blended learning to improve education in the state.

But the same glass can be viewed as half empty when we see superintendents' frustration, disdain and outright hostility towards reforms that Ohio policy leaders consider important and have staunchly supported (many of which we at Fordham also favor). For example, superintendents' support is in the single digits when it comes to charter schools, vouchers, and A-to-F report cards for districts and schools. Only 8 percent think that such report cards will fundamentally improve education – and barely 2 percent think charters or vouchers will make a fundamental difference. The state's new Third Grade Reading Guarantee is only slightly less unpopular with one in five superintendents believing that this policy can bring fundamental improvement to Ohio education.

This survey indicates that Ohio's superintendents as a group are distinctly chilly toward parents and students having school choices they can't control. They don't favor competition and they aren't fans of having the state grade their schools in clear ways that parents and taxpayers can relate to.

As with much survey research, this study also yielded some paradoxical findings – perhaps underscoring the "half full, half empty" dilemma. For example, 69 percent of Ohio superintendents think the state's public schools as a whole are "keeping up with a changing world" and giving most kids a good education. Yet 44 percent of them indicated that all districts could be doing "a lot better" than they are.

Another semi-paradox can be found around the issue of open enrollment, which most superintendents favor and think their districts can benefit from. In the suburbs, how-

ever, we find considerable resistance to open enrollment, suggesting that many key education gatekeepers are content to protect what they've got while barring kids – needy kids – who could benefit from their academic success. We do not doubt that this reflects the views of many of their constituents and board members. Yet it's still reprehensible, fostering the creation and continuation of education ghettos and showing the ugly side of local control.

🗨️ *Ohio's superintendents as a group are distinctly chilly toward parents and students having school choices they can't control.*

Fortunately, there are contrarians here, too, and these are worth pointing out. For example, in recent months both Reynoldsburg (a suburb of Columbus) and West Carrollton (a suburb of Dayton) have opened their districts to any child in the state who wants to enroll in their schools. The FDR Group, in fact, identified a group of contrarians among the 344 superintendents responding to the survey, a cluster of superintendents – again, anonymous here – who support reforms like the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and are more hopeful about school choice.

District leaders are the educators-in-chief for the vast majority of Ohio's 1.75 million students, the front-line professionals responsible for executing state and federal education policies. They are the decision-makers and executives charged with making schools and districts succeed. Hence their attitudes, beliefs, and preferences matter quite a bit,

as (of course) do the actions undertaken (or shunned) by their schools. It is important that their voices be heard, even when we don't agree with everything they say.

Ohio has embarked on a series of bold and necessary reforms. For these reforms to deliver results over the long-haul, those responsible for their implementation have to own them, not be tasked with carrying out policies that they abhor. Yes, superintendents and their districts can be compelled – or induced with money – to change in ways they don't like. But such changes are rarely done well, seldom get traction, and only infrequently succeed.

That's no reason for the reformers to cease and desist. It is, however, reason for them to redouble their efforts not only to enact changes that education leaders applaud but also to strive to change minds and attitudes when it comes to changes that may be very good for children and taxpayers but that are resisted by those who run the schools.

It's also reason for policy reformers to consider what they can do that might help change minds, surely including clear policy communications, sufficient resources, reasonable timetables, maximum flexibility on the implementation front – and plenty of opportunity for all concerned to spend time reasoning together. Reformers are right to put the interests of kids above those of grownups in the education system – but they do themselves (and the kids) a big favor when they go about their work of making changes in a considerate, transparent, and open-minded way.

Chester E. Finn, Jr., President

Terry Ryan, Vice President for Ohio Programs and Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on the responses to an online survey conducted in Spring 2013 with 344 school district superintendents in Ohio. The survey covered seven education policies, specifically: Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluations, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, open enrollment, A-to-F ratings for schools and districts, individualized learning (blended learning and credit flexibility), and school choice (charter schools and vouchers). It also included several questions on general attitudes towards school reform in Ohio and two trend items. What follows are the key findings.

COMMON CORE

This is the most highly rated of the reforms, and the vast majority think it will be still going strong five years from now. While professional development to prepare teachers for teaching to the new standards is well under way, curriculum alignment remains a work in progress. The absence of the PARCC assessments is a major reason why full implementation remains slow.

- 68 percent consider the implementation of the Common Core State Standards as an initiative that will lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio's K-12 education system.
- 81 percent believe that five years down the line the Common Core State Standards “will be widely and routinely in use in Ohio.”
- Almost two in three (64 percent) indicate that more than 75 percent or virtually all of their teachers have participated in professional development and are now prepared to teach to the Common Core State Standards. But few say their English language arts curriculum (26 percent) or mathematics curriculum (23 percent) have been “completely” revised to align with the standards.
- The obstacles to implementing the Common Core include (in descending order of significance, by percent saying very or somewhat serious problem):
 - o The absence of the PARCC assessments, making preparation for the standards difficult (87 percent)

- o Having sufficient computers and technological capacity to administer the PARCC assessments (77 percent)
- o Training teachers to teach to the standards (47 percent)
- o Getting buy-in for the standards among key stakeholders (37 percent)

TEACHER EVALUATION

There's modest support for using value-added assessments as part of teacher evaluations. Although most believe it's a policy that's here to stay, overwhelming majorities predict legal challenges and principal burn-out. There's concern about implementation, particularly in terms of the difficulty in measuring student growth in subjects other than English and math.

- 42 percent say “teacher evaluations that integrate value-added assessments” is an initiative that will lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio's K-12 education system.
- 73 percent believe it will become accepted practice in the next few years, and just 39 percent that Ohio will postpone or cancel implementation of this policy.
- Some effects of using value-added assessments in teacher evaluations (in descending order of significance, by percent saying very or somewhat likely):
 - o There will be widespread legal challenges when decisions on teacher pay and employment are based on assessments (93 percent)
 - o The teacher observation requirements will put too much pressure on principals (86 percent)
 - o It will prove too difficult to implement student growth measures for some subjects (85 percent)
- By more than two to one margin (66 percent to 26 percent), superintendents say the bigger obstacle to using student growth measures in teacher evaluations is “inadequate tests and other technical imple-

mentation issues,” not political resistance from teachers and their associations.

THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE

Relatively few superintendents indicate support for this policy, and the vast majority considers it an unnecessary burden. Still, by superintendents’ own account, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is having an impact and will push districts to do more to help struggling readers in the early grades.

- 20 percent believe the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is an initiative that will bring fundamental improvement to K-12 education in Ohio.
- 81 percent think it “imposes unnecessary burdens on most districts that were already doing all they could.” Just 15 percent say “the policy is necessary because some districts were not doing the job and this forces all districts to focus on struggling readers earlier.”
- Although almost half of Ohio’s superintendents (46 percent) say the law has caused them to implement new interventions or policies; 51 percent say it has not.
- 77 percent believe the Third Grade Reading Guarantee “will be scaled back substantially because of concerns about high rates of retention.” 30 percent say it pushes their district a lot more in terms of retaining students, and another 35 percent say it pushes them a little more (32 percent say it has no impact on retention).

OPEN ENROLLMENT

Most districts have a total open enrollment policy, but whether they do or not, most think it results in a net gain of students and consider it a school choice alternative worth pursuing.

- 22 percent think of open enrollment as an initiative that will bring fundamental improvement to K-12 education in Ohio.
- Almost two out of three superintendents (65 percent) think open enrollment results in a net gain of students for the district and just 21 percent in a net loss.

- 65 percent consider it a serious option worth pursuing rather than something to be avoided (24 percent).
- Superintendents in suburban districts are less likely than urban, rural, and small town superintendents to have open enrollment or to hold positive opinions about it. Suburban superintendents are less likely to report that:
 - o Their districts are operating under a total open enrollment policy (33 percent, compared with 69 percent for urban, 70 percent for small town and 92 percent for rural superintendents).
 - o Open enrollment is “a serious option your district should pursue (or keep)” (43 percent, compared with 61 percent for urban, 79 percent for small town and 75 percent for rural superintendents).
 - o It is a reform that will lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s system of K-12 public education (16 percent suburban and 14 percent urban vs. 32 percent small town and 27 percent rural).

OTHER REFORMS

Blended learning – 59 percent think it will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio. 64 percent say their districts make some use of blended learning, 5 percent that it’s widespread and 31 percent that it’s limited or nonexistent.

Credit flexibility – 46 percent think it will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio. 52 percent indicate that few or none of their students use it, 44 percent say some do, and just 4 percent say many. Among those who say that some or many of the students in their district use credit flexibility, they are equally likely to say it is utilized to make up courses (23 percent) or to take advanced courses online (26 percent).

A-to-F ratings – Just 8 percent think “publicized A-to-F ratings of school districts and buildings” will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio.

Charter schools – Just 2 percent think charter schools will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio. Fully 53 percent believe that their impact has been to “hurt traditional school districts and worsen[ed] education for students”; 31 percent that their impact has been mixed;

4 percent that charter schools “have pushed traditional school districts to improve and fight harder for students”; and another 11 percent that they have not had much effect.

Vouchers – Just 2 percent think vouchers will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio.

GENERAL ATTITUDES ON REFORM

Forced to choose whether most of Ohio’s educational challenges are confined to the state’s large urban centers or its poor rural areas, or whether most challenges are widespread and “even suburban, affluent districts could be doing a lot better,” 52 percent choose confined and 44 percent widespread. One might have expected to see suburban superintendents point to urban or rural districts as the problem areas, so it’s especially interesting to note no significant differences by geography. (42 percent suburban, 53 percent urban, and 46 percent rural superintendents think the state’s educational challenges are widespread.)

The vast majority (69 percent) believes that the public schools are “keeping up with a changing world” and giving most students a good education, but 30 percent think “public education is stuck in old ways of doing things.”

Ninety percent are of the opinion that “too often, Ohio’s elected officials make education policy to score political points – the politicians should let the education professionals” do their job.

CHANGES OVER TIME

Teacher licensure process – When surveyed two years ago, 39 percent of Ohio’s district superintendents said that going through the teacher licensure process in the Buckeye State meant that a teacher “has done little more than gone through procedural compliance.” Today, only 25 percent agree – a 14 point decline. Sixty-three percent now believe the process guarantees that a teacher “at least starts with a base-line of acceptable quality” (up from 55 percent) and those who believe it means a teacher “is well-prepared to succeed in the classroom” has improved to 11 percent (up from 5 percent).

Publicizing school and district standardized test scores – When surveyed two years ago, 30 percent of Ohio’s district superintendents felt that it was mostly harmful to publicize students’ standardized test scores “because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure” and 57 percent felt that it was mostly good “because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed.” Today, 41 percent say mostly harmful and 49 percent mostly good. That’s an 11 point increase in the negative point of view.

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the pace of change in Ohio’s K-12 education reform is accelerating even as the challenges facing school districts and their leaders have grown. Failed levies, declining enrollments, increased competition, budget cuts, pay freezes, and lay-offs are prevalent for many districts. At the same time, districts must implement reforms in teacher evaluation, the Common Core State Standards, and the Third Grade Reading Guarantee – to name but a few.

Only some of the education reform story is the passage of legislation; the real work gets done – or doesn’t get done – at the district and building level by the professionals responsible for education. This study is a chance to hear from those who must lead and implement the laws and policies emanating from Columbus – the district superintendents.

All 614 of Ohio’s superintendents of traditional school districts were invited to participate in the survey; 344 did so, for a response rate of 56 percent. The survey was fielded online, between March 21 and April 9, 2013. It was preceded by two focus groups with superintendents as well as eight one-on-one telephone interviews with a variety of Ohio education leaders. The study is the second in a series with Ohio’s district leaders and follows *Yearning to Break Free: Ohio Superintendents Speak Out*, published in 2011.

By design, the survey is focused on getting superintendents to report on the progress of reform implementation in their own districts. How far along are they when it comes to revising the curriculum and teacher training for the Common Core State Standards? Where are the speed bumps when it comes to using student test data in teacher evaluation? What are the effects of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee on their districts’ policies? Which reforms do superintendents predict will stand the test of time?

The study also delves into the politics of reform – the credibility, trust, and quality of communication among Ohio’s superintendents, policymakers, and education reformers. The findings suggest that openness to change and the progress of reform is connected to the quality of dialogue taking place.

ENCOURAGING TREND: TEACHER LICENSURE

Much of this study is about implementation of reforms and – as always with snapshots – it’s easier to see obstacles

and missing elements than to see progress. It might therefore be useful to first report an encouraging trend regarding teacher licensure and teacher quality, an illustration that reforms can have positive impact over time.

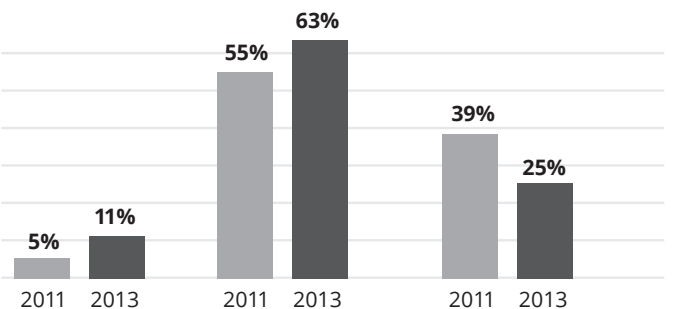
Over the past several years Ohio has been toughening its teacher licensure process, lengthening the residency and mentoring requirements, and making tenure possible after nine years, not three. These changes seem to have made a difference: in our 2011 superintendents’ survey, 39 percent thought the teacher licensure process meant a teacher “has done little more than gone through procedural compliance.”

Today, only 25 percent agree – a 14 point decline. Instead, 63 percent now believe it guarantees that a teacher “at least starts with a base-line of acceptable quality” (up from 55 percent) and those who believe it means a teacher “is well-prepared to succeed in the classroom” has improved to 11 percent (up from 5 percent). Although these shifts are hardly earth-shattering, they are significant and a useful reminder that reforms can sometimes deliver on the promise of improvement – at least as far as perceptions are concerned.

(Q5)

MORE CONFIDENCE IN TEACHER LICENSURE

Would you say that going through the licensure process in Ohio guarantees that a teacher:



Is well-prepared to succeed in the classroom

At least starts with a base-line of acceptable quality

Has done little more than gone through procedural compliance

2011 N=246; 2013 N=344

Note: Question wording in charts may be slightly edited for space. Full question wording is available in the Complete Survey Results at the end of this report. Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding or the omission of some answer categories. N=344 superintendents unless otherwise indicated.

RELEVANT REFORMS

Tweaking the process of teacher licensure is but one example of school reform in Ohio. There are many key elements of the Buckeye State’s K-12 education system undergoing overhaul. School funding, standards and accountability, teacher performance, and school choice are changing and have been the subject of recurring reforms since at least the mid-1990s.

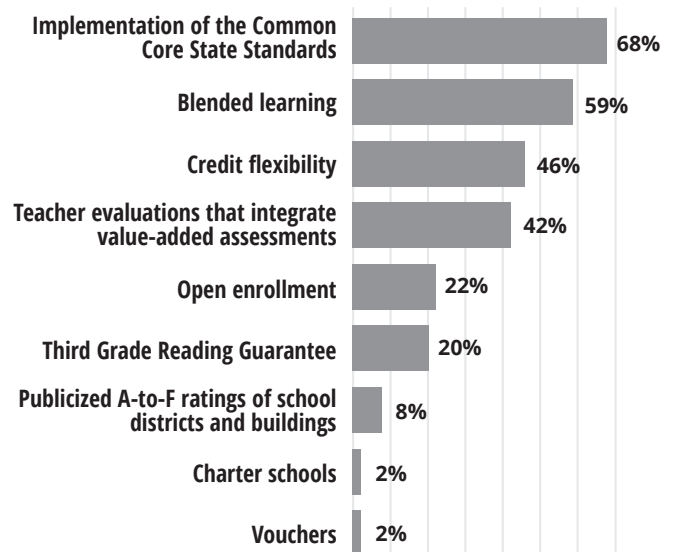
For the better part of two decades, there has hardly been a year when new school reforms haven’t been introduced in Ohio.

For the better part of two decades, there has hardly been a year when new school reforms haven’t been introduced in Ohio. In this survey, we explore school leaders’ experiences with seven relevant and timely education reform policies and innovative educational practices: Common Core State Standards, individualized instruction (blended learning and credit flexibility), teacher evaluations, open enrollment, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, A-to-F ratings for schools and districts, and school choice (charter schools, and vouchers).

We asked district superintendents to rate these educational reform initiatives (some of which are currently in

place and others that are coming soon). The rating scale was 1-to-5, where 5 means they think the policy will lead to fundamental improvement and 1 that it won’t improve things at all for Ohio K-12. Each of these educational reform initiatives will be discussed in greater detail in the pages of this report. For now, the table below provides a snapshot of district superintendents’ views on which policies are more promising and which are less.

(Q6a-i)
POLICIES THAT WILL LEAD TO FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENT IN OHIO K-12
 (% rating each item a 4 or 5 on a 1-to-5 scale)



STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This section will address the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluations, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, and A-to-F school ratings.

Policy #1: Common Core State Standards

Ohio is among the 45 states that have volunteered to adopt the Common Core State Standards, designed to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn” and to be “relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.”* The learning standards, which are in English language arts and mathematics, were released in June 2010 and adopted by Ohio’s State Board of Education at that time. Because it is so often on the forefront of educational reforms, Ohio is widely considered a bellwether and its implementation of the Common Core is being closely watched by educators and policymakers across the country.

According to Ohio district superintendents, this is by far the most promising of reforms in the state. “Implementation of the Common Core State Standards” tops the list of nine policy initiatives that superintendents rated as likely to “lead to fundamental improvement” in Ohio’s K-12 system of education (68 percent rated this a 4 or 5 on a 1-to-5 scale). While there’s evidence of both progress and challenges in terms of implementation, one thing is for certain: superintendents expect the Common Core to have staying power. Fully eight in ten (81 percent) believe that five years down the line the Common Core State Standards “will be widely and routinely in use in Ohio.” Only one in ten (10 percent) says it “will have faded away by then.” And a relatively small 37 percent of superintendents consider “getting buy-in for the standards among key stakeholders” to be a very or somewhat serious problem in their districts.

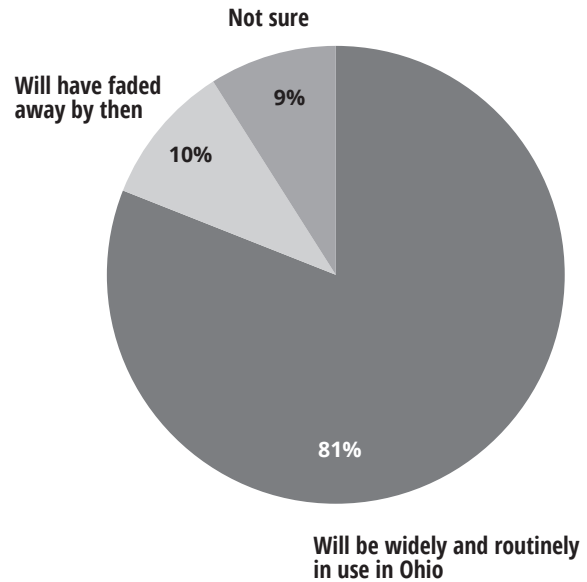
More Progress on Professional Development than on Curriculum Alignment

The findings indicate that districts have made great progress with regard to teachers’ professional development on the Common Core. Approximately two in three district superintendents say that more than 75 percent of their teachers (27 percent) or virtually all (37 percent) have participated in professional development to prepare them for the new standards.

(Q16)

THE COMMON CORE HAS STAYING POWER

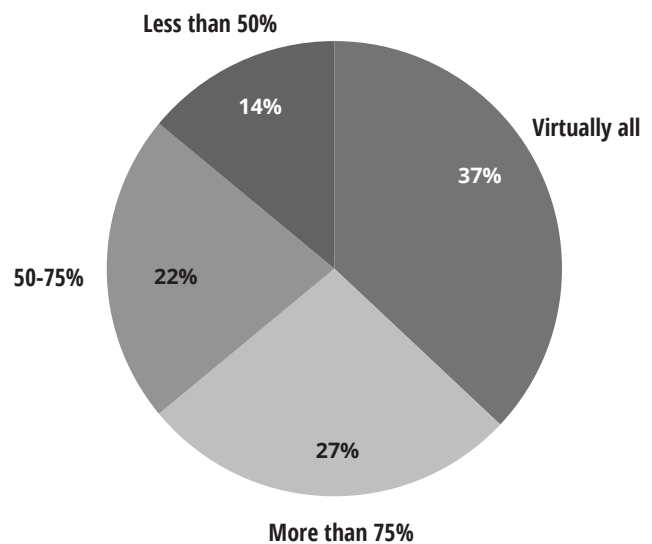
Five years down the line, do you think that the Common Core State Standards:



(Q13)

EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

About what proportion of the teachers in your district would you say have undergone professional development and are now prepared to teach to the Common Core State Standards?



* Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/process>

Yet, this has not been without challenges. Almost half (47 percent) also report that “training teachers to teach to the standards” is a very or somewhat serious problem in their district – a finding more pronounced among superintendents in urban districts (61 percent urban, compared with 42 percent suburban, 45 percent small town, and 44 percent rural). “The Common Core State Standards are a fundamental shift in rigor, relevance and preparedness for students,” one superintendent wrote. “...We really need to help teachers develop instructional strategies, their instructional craft, so they can meet the challenges of CCSS.”

There is a notable distinction between progress on professional development, where most districts appear to be well on their way, and actually aligning curriculum to the standards. Approximately one-quarter of superintendents say that their English language arts curriculum (26 percent) and mathematics curriculum (23 percent) have been “completely” revised to align with the Common Core, with virtually all of the remainder saying alignment is currently “in progress” (73 percent for English language arts and 77 percent for math).

Several superintendents acknowledged the obstacles they’ve faced in making this happen. One wrote about the difficulty in giving up a beloved curriculum: “We’re struggling a little with implementing. We did the gap analysis. We’ve changed our standards based report card. Changing the math curriculum – we love Everyday Math – it’s hard for us to change.” Others, like this one, spoke about the time commitment, saying, “What we thought we could do in two years, I could easily see this taking five or six years. Our maps and pacing guide, it’s going to take us years to get there.”

“What we thought we could do in two years, I could easily see this taking five or six years. Our maps and pacing guide, it’s going to take us years to get there.”

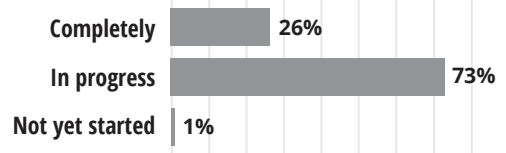
- Ohio Superintendent

A partial explanation for what may seem to be the slow pace of curriculum alignment is the delay in the PARCC assessments (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) – the assessments being developed to align with Common Core but that won’t be available until the 2014-15 school year.

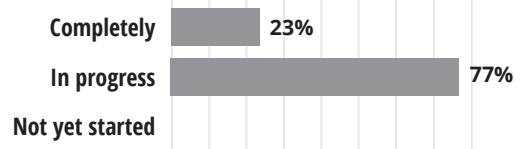
(Q14 AND 15)
INCREMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION ON ALIGNING CURRICULUM TO CCSS

To what extent has the curriculum in your district been revised to align with the Common Core State Standards?

English/language arts curriculum

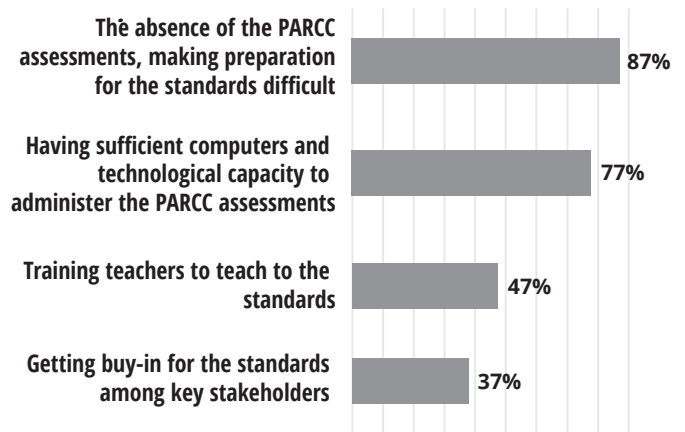


Math curriculum



(Q12)
OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTING COMMON CORE
 (% saying very or somewhat serious problem)

How serious a problem is each of the following in your district when it comes to implementing the Common Core State Standards?



The overwhelming majority of superintendents – 87 percent – say that the absence of the PARCC assessments is a very or somewhat serious problem when it comes to preparing for the standards. When the tests are ready, superintendents say, then the curriculum can change. As one superintendent put it: “What gets measured gets done. Until it gets measured, it doesn’t get done.” Along the same lines, 77 percent say that having enough computers and technological capacity to administer the PARCC assessments is a very or somewhat serious problem.

Who's Leading the Charge on Common Core

A group of superintendents indicate that their districts are at the highest levels of preparedness when it comes to implementing the Common Core. These high-level implementers comprise 12 percent of the sample, all saying that:

- “Virtually all” of their teachers had undergone professional development and were now prepared to teach to the Common Core State Standards
- Their district’s English language arts curriculum had been completely revised to align with the Common Core
- Their district’s math curriculum had been completely revised to align with Common Core

While these 12 percent are high-level implementers of the Common Core, an additional third of Ohio’s superintendents (33 percent) say that implementation is in progress, and 54 percent could be deemed “stragglers.” Districts that did not participate in the Race to the Top initiative are more likely to be stragglers (60 percent) than those that participated (47 percent). Superintendents who’ve been leading their districts for eight to fifteen years are more likely to be high-level implementers of the Common Core (23 percent) compared with the newest leaders (one to two years at the helm) who are at 8 percent.

Policy #2: Teacher Evaluations

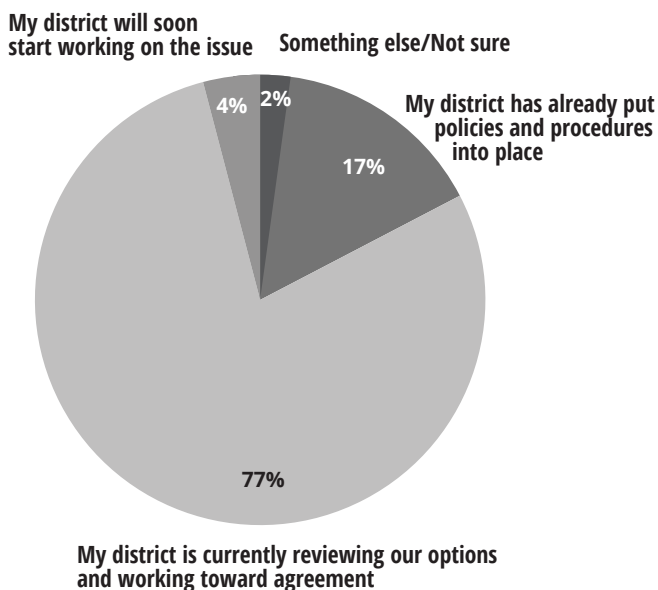
Ohio is part of a nationwide trend to include student achievement and test scores in teacher evaluations. The Buckeye State’s law requires implementation – by July 2014 – of value-added measures intended to capture how much students learn while they are with a teacher. Fifty percent of a teacher’s evaluation will be based on students’ academic growth; the other half, on classroom observations. Although many superintendents believe these changes are likely to improve education, and that this is the future face of education, they also warn that implementation challenges are afoot. Most dramatically, few indicate that their districts are currently ready for this change.

Ohio superintendents support integrating value-added assessments into teacher evaluations: 42 percent rate it as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. An overwhelming majority (73 percent) believes it will become accepted practice in the next few years. One superintendent wrote, “More rigorous standards and assessments will force some staff members that need to get with the program to evolve or become extinct.”

Nevertheless, an alarmingly small number of school superintendents report that their districts are prepared for the inclusion of value-added assessments in their teacher evaluations. At the time of completing this survey, only 17 percent said their own district had already put value-added policies and procedures into place. Most (77 percent) reported that their district is still in the process of review and working toward agreement.

(Q8) VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT AS PART OF TEACHER EVALUATION

Which best describes your district when it comes to including value-added assessments in teacher evaluations?



The Real Speed Bump Is Implementation

Contrary to conventional wisdom, it's not politics and resistance from teacher associations that most concern district leaders. By more than two to one (66 percent to 26 percent), superintendents say the bigger obstacle to using student growth measures in teacher evaluations is "inadequate tests and other implementation issues," not political resistance from teachers and their associations.

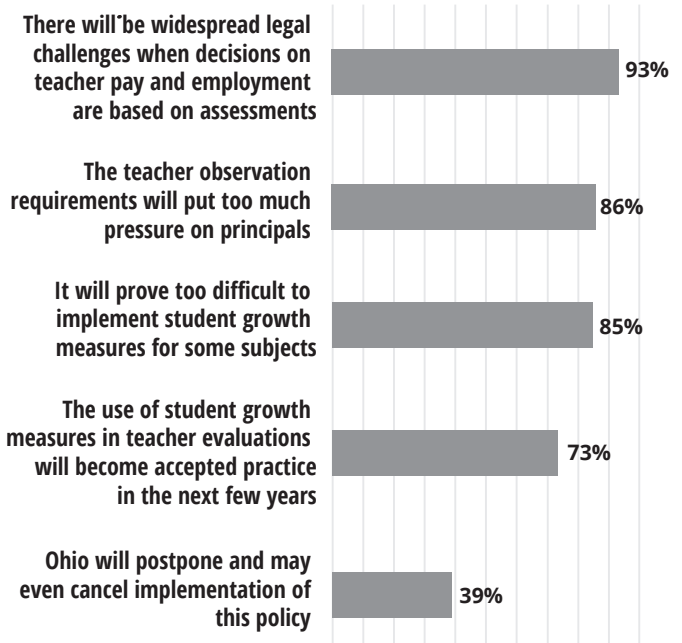
“Teachers with the exact same licensure might find one required to use an OAA (Ohio Achievement Assessments) test. Another may utilize an approved vendor assessment, yet a third may require utilizing an SLO (Student Learning Objective). How is that consistent and/or fair?”

- Ohio Superintendent

As one superintendent said, “Issues arise regarding groups of students who have a teacher only for one quarter. Issues arise for teachers of art, music, industrial arts, work study programs, who have multiple students over short time periods.” In fact, fully 85 percent of Ohio district superintendents say it “will prove too difficult to implement student growth measures for some subjects.” “Teachers with the exact same licensure might find one required to use an OAA (Ohio Achievement Assessments) test,” said another superintendent. “Another may utilize an approved vendor assessment, yet a third may require utilizing an SLO (Student Learning Objective). How is that consistent and/or fair?”

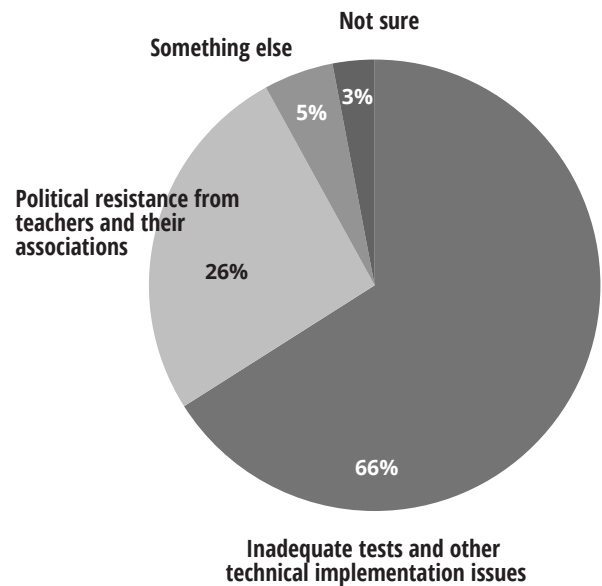
(Q10)
IMPACT OF VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENTS
(% saying very or somewhat likely)

When it comes to incorporating value-added assessments in evaluating Ohio's teachers, how likely is each of the following to happen?



(Q11)
TEACHERS ARE NOT THE PROBLEM

Which do you think will be the bigger obstacle to implementing student growth in teacher evaluations?



Get Ready for Lawyers and Principal Burn-Out

Ohio's district leaders almost unanimously (93 percent) agree that "there will be widespread legal challenges when decisions on teacher pay and employment are based on assessments." "You're going to end up at the state labor relations board, so you're going to have to spend some money," one superintendent explained. "Every one of them is going to be challenged."

Another said, "I think OTEs (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System) has missed the mark on student growth and will not stand the serious legal challenges that will emerge." Superintendents may be mindful of a recent (and widely publicized) lawsuit in Florida, a state that passed a similar law requiring public school teachers to be evaluated in part based on student standardized test scores.*

Another consequence of teacher evaluation, according to superintendents, is the inevitability of principal burn-out. Half of a teacher evaluation will come from principal observations, and almost nine in ten (86 percent) foresee that "the teacher observation requirements will put too much pressure on principals." One superintendent described it like this: "It will over-tax the principals and render them useless. They will need to spend so much time on evaluations, they will not have time for anything else."

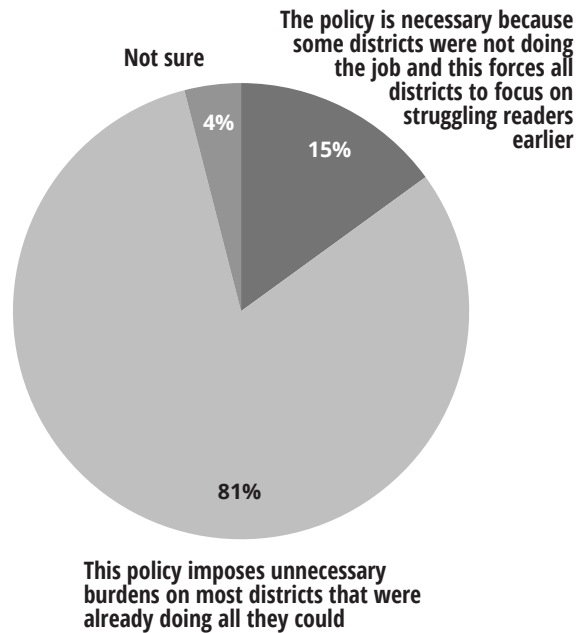
Policy #3: Third Grade Reading Guarantee

Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee is the object of contradictory views. On the one hand, district superintendents seem to view it as a superfluous policy that will do little to improve education and that was intended to score political points. On the other hand, they also acknowledge that the law has had some concrete and beneficial consequences in their own districts.

Eight in ten superintendents (81 percent) think the Third Grade Reading Guarantee "imposes unnecessary burdens on most districts that were already doing all they could"; by sharp contrast, just 15 percent say "the policy is necessary because some districts were not doing the job" with struggling readers. Only 20 percent rate it as a 4 or 5 (on a 5-point scale) as an initiative that will bring fundamental improvement to K-12 education in Ohio. And although almost half of Ohio's superintendents (46 percent) say the law has caused them to implement new interventions or policies, 51 percent say the things their districts had in place already met the law's requirements.

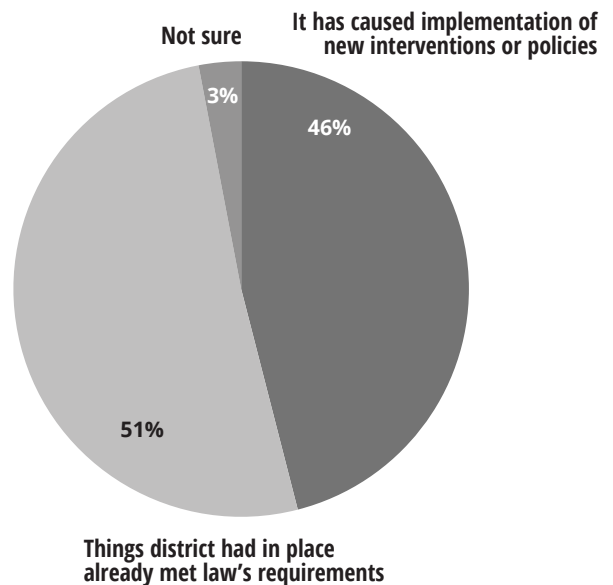
(Q21) THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE - AN UNNECESSARY BURDEN

Which comes closer to your view on Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?



(Q22) THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE - 50/50 IMPACT

Has the Third Grade Reading Guarantee caused your district to implement any new interventions or policies, or did the things your district had in place already meet the law's requirements?



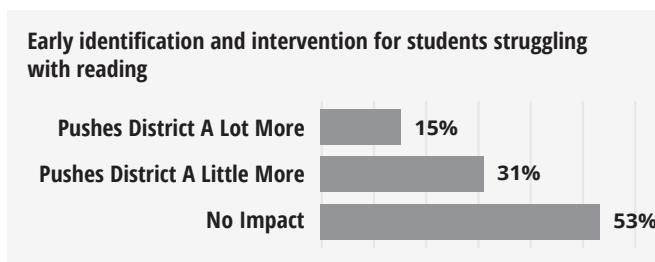
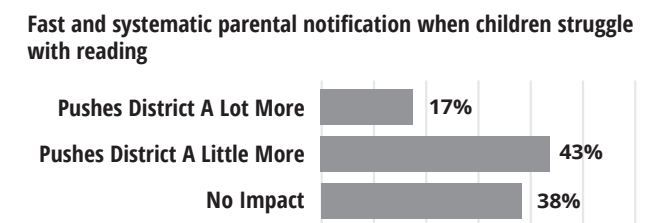
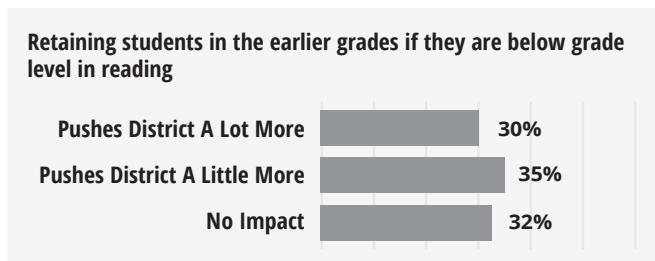
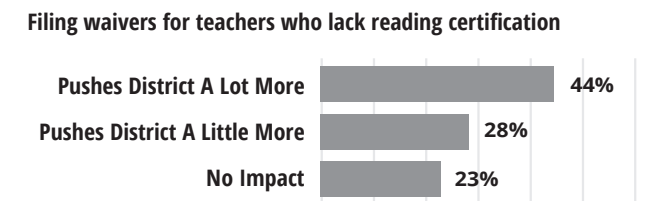
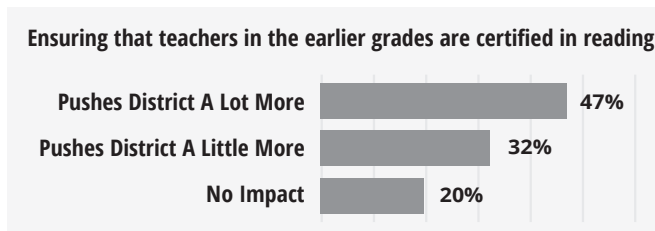
* Stephen Sawchuk, "Florida Unions Sue Over Test-Score-Based Evaluations," Education Week, April 16, 2013, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/04/16/29lawsuit.h32.html>

The Third Grade Reading Guarantee forbids schools from promoting to fourth grade, with some exceptions, students who score below a certain level on the state reading test; and it requires testing in grades K through 3, notification to parents of students whose reading skills are not meeting the mark, and the development of a plan of action for students identified as under-performing.* In our survey, a battery of questions asks superintendents to report on the impact of the law. By their own account, the law has had significant consequences – and large numbers predict more down the line.

(Q23)

IMPACT OF THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE

How much does the Third Grade Reading Guarantee push your district to do each of the following?



Mandated Teacher Certification an Obstacle

One of the most obvious consequences concerns the mandate that K-3 teachers who teach reading must be certified to teach the subject. Districts are taking stock of their instructors: waivers will be sought, new hiring will be made with an eye on reading certification status. “The biggest difficulty is the licensure certification requirement,” described one superintendent in a focus group. “I’ve got great teachers that fall short just because they don’t have a reading certificate, but I can’t argue. Next year I’ll file a waiver in a second. I’m probably ten staff members short of fulfilling that legislation.”

“The only thing it [Third Grade Reading Guarantee] changed is how we communicate with parents. Students who are at risk and who need intense intervention, I don’t know that we were officially notifying parents.”

- Ohio Superintendent

Almost half (47 percent) say the Third Grade Reading Guarantee pushes their district a lot more in terms of “ensuring that teachers in the earlier grades are certified in reading,” and another 32 percent say it pushes the district a little more. Just 20 percent think it will have no impact. The numbers are along the same lines when it comes to “filing waivers for teachers who lack reading certification”: 44 percent that it pushes their district a lot more; 28 percent a little more; and 23 percent that it will have no impact.

Policy Will Push Districts to Warn Parents, Hold Back Students, Identify Struggling Readers Early

When it comes to “fast and systematic parental notification” for struggling readers, 17 percent of superintendents say the legislation pushes them to do a lot more, and another 43 percent a little more; 38 percent say it will have no impact. In the focus groups, superintendents acknowledged that they may not be as systematic as the law would

* The Third Grade Reading Guarantee was approved at the state level in spring 2012, with full implementation planned for school year 2013-14. Tweaks to the original law to amend some of its provisions were approved on March 22, 2013, just one day after fielding for this survey began. See Ohio Legislative Service Commission, Bill Analysis, Sub. S.B. 21.

like in terms of alerting parents, but that identifying and intervening to help struggling readers was already at the top of their agenda.

As one superintendent described it, “The only thing it changed is how we communicate with parents. Students who are at risk and who need intense intervention, I don’t know that we were officially notifying parents. The testing starting at Kindergarten, we were already doing that. The intervention, yes.”

But the real teeth behind the law is in its retention requirement: With some exceptions, it requires districts to retain students who fail the state’s reading test. Here, about a third (32 percent) of superintendents say their districts will experience no increase in retention. Instead, 30 percent say the Reading Guarantee pushes their district a lot more in terms of “retaining students in the earlier grades if they are below grade level in reading,” with another 35 percent saying it pushes them a little more. One superintendent warned, “We might start holding back kids in kindergarten, which we’ve never done before.”

Ohio’s superintendents worry that too many K-3 students will be held back as a result of the law – so many students, that an overwhelming majority predicts the law will be changed in the face of public outcry. Only 16 percent of superintendents predict that five years down the line the Third Grade Reading Guarantee will be in force in Ohio; 77 percent say it “will be scaled back substantially because of concerns about high rates of retention.” “I think it [the law] will be revised. There’s going to be massive retentions otherwise. And what happens if they don’t pass the next year? What are the benefits of retention? The research shows it doesn’t work.”

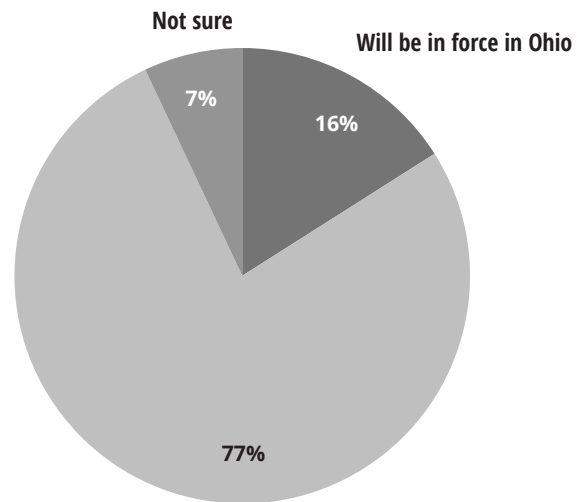
In our focus groups and interviews, a few superintendents also brought up the state’s previous (failed) effort at a reading guarantee and predicted that the current effort would be abandoned as well.

According to one of the legislators we interviewed in the preliminary stages of this research effort, the real intent of the law’s retention requirement was to push districts to work harder on identifying kids who are struggling with reading – and to do something about it before it’s too late. But a 53 percent majority of superintendents says the legislation will have no impact on pushing them to do more on “early identification and intervention” of struggling readers. Said one superintendent: “We were doing it already anyway – the [notification] letter and the certification are new.” Still, 15 percent do say the Third Grade Reading Guarantee pushes them a lot more on early identification, and 31 percent say a little more.

(Q24)

SCALING BACK THE THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE

Five years down the line, do you think that the Third Grade Reading Guarantee:



Will be scaled back substantially because of concerns about high rates of retention

Policy #4: Publicized School and District Ratings

Two years ago, in *Yearning to Break Free*, we presented the following scenario to district superintendents: “In Ohio, schools and districts are evaluated by how well students do on standardized tests, and the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action.” When we asked whether this was mostly harmful “because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure” or mostly good “because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed,” in 2011, 30 percent said mostly harmful, and 57 percent mostly good.

“Publicizing A-to-F is only a reporting model. It’s for public opinion only. It doesn’t add anything to student achievement.”

- Ohio Superintendent

But times have changed. When superintendents were presented this same scenario and question in spring 2013, 41 percent said mostly harmful and 49 percent mostly good. That’s an 11 point increase in the negative point of view. Along the same lines, just 8 percent indicate that they like the concept of “publicized A-to-F ratings of school districts and buildings” as an initiative that will fundamentally improve K-12 education in Ohio (rated 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale).

One explanation for superintendents’ increased resistance to school and district ratings could be a reaction to the upcoming change in the rating scale from the current descriptive categories – “Excellent with Distinction” and “Academic Emergency” – to the more conventional A-to-F

letter grades. According to one superintendent, “Publicizing A-to-F is only a reporting model. It’s for public opinion only. It doesn’t add anything to student academics.”

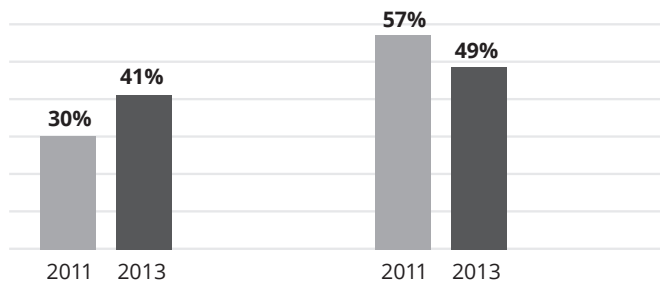
What’s more, it’s interesting to note that the majority of school districts in the 2011-12 school year had either an “Excellent” or “Excellent with Distinction” rating (in the current survey, these are 43 percent and 21 percent, respectively). With a change in terminology, superintendents may wonder, where will my district fall? What’s the likelihood of being downgraded? This may lead some superintendents to the conviction that changes are occurring for cosmetic rather than substantive purposes.

Finally, Ohio had a formal investigation into school attendance tampering in the 2011-12 school year, which may have generally lessened superintendents trust in the statewide report card as a measure.*

(Q5)

DECLINING SUPPORT FOR PUBLICIZING SCHOOL RATINGS

In Ohio, schools and districts are evaluated by how well students do on standardized tests, and the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action. Do you think that using test scores this way:



Is mostly HARMFUL because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure

Is mostly GOOD because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed

2011 N=246; 2013 N=344

* David Yost, Auditor of State, Statewide Audit of Student Attendance Data and Accountability System, February 11, 2013, http://www.auditor.state.oh.us/publications/issues/Attendance_FINAL_2-11-13.pdf

SCHOOL CHOICE

The concept of school choice can take many forms and here we look at a variety of options – open enrollment, blended learning, credit flexibility, and charter schools and vouchers. While reformers think that choice, in whatever form, can invigorate education by giving families options other than traditional neighborhood schools, the data suggest that Ohio’s district superintendents are less than enthusiastic and do not see school choice as a panacea. The one exception appears to be open enrollment.

Policy #5: Open Enrollment

District superintendents describe open enrollment as a widespread practice that is worth considering. Seventy percent of our superintendent sample say their district currently operates under a total open enrollment policy, and another 12 percent a limited one. Overall, 17 percent say their district does not participate at all.* Almost two out of three superintendents (65 percent) think open enrollment results in a net gain of students for the district and just 21 percent in a net loss. Virtually the same percentages consider it a serious option worth pursuing (65 percent) rather than something to be avoided (24 percent).

Still, only about one in five superintendents overall consider open enrollment a promising policy option that will bring fundamental improvement to Ohio K-12 education (22 percent rate it a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale).

Superintendents in suburban districts stand out as less enamored with open enrollment than their colleagues.

Superintendents in suburban districts stand out as less enamored with open enrollment than their colleagues. First, suburban superintendents are less likely to report that their district is operating under a total open enrollment policy (33 percent, compared with 69 percent for urban,

70 percent for small town, and 92 percent for rural superintendents). They are also less likely to think of it as “a serious option your district should pursue (or keep)” (43 percent, compared with 61 percent for urban, 79 percent for small town, and 75 percent for rural superintendents).

Finally, suburban and urban superintendents are about half as likely to rate it as a 4 or 5 (on a 5-point scale) as leading to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s system of K-12 public education (16 percent suburban and 14 percent urban vs. 32 percent small town and 27 percent rural).

OPEN ENROLLMENT IS PROMISING

(Q25)

Does your district currently operate under:

A limited open enrollment policy	12%
A total open enrollment policy	70%
Not participating at all	17%

(Q26)

If (or when) your district adopted an open enrollment policy, do you think it would experience (or did it experience):

A net gain of students	65%
A net loss of students	21%
No difference in the number of students	10%

(Q27)

Do you think of open enrollment as:

A serious option your district should pursue (or keep)	65%
Something you would recommend avoiding	24%

It may be that suburban superintendents are more likely to see K-12 education in their districts as a unique service provided to the people who’ve chosen to live in their communities – and probably pay handsome tax rates for the privilege of doing so. In addition, suburban superintendents may be less likely to need the extra funding that comes with an out-of-district student. They also may have less appetite for confronting possible resistance from locals eager “to protect” their communities from outsiders.

* Statewide, 65 percent of districts have total open enrollment, 13 percent accept students from neighboring districts, and 23 percent have none: Ohio Department of Education, “Open Enrollment Listing,” <http://www.education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=704&ContentID=21640&Content=138906>, updated January 18, 2013.

Policy #6: Individualized Instruction

Blended learning and “credit flex” are two initiatives centered on individualizing instruction – efforts on the part of school districts to reach today’s students where they are academically, rather than based on age or seat time. “Instead of making kids fit our model, we need to fit theirs,” one superintendent wrote. “The students are different,” another superintendent told us. “Back in the day when we were students, we were more structured. My students (today) are learning independently.” Although these two initiatives are relatively well-regarded, they have not gained widespread use, particularly in Ohio’s small town and rural schools.

Blended Learning

Blended learning – courses designed to include both classroom instruction and online learning – is second on the list of nine potential reforms that superintendents rated as likely to lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s K-12 education (59 percent rated it a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Its current use in Ohio is by no means extensive but it does seem to be emergent.

Only 5 percent of superintendents say the use of blended learning is widespread in their district; an additional 64 percent say their districts make some use of it to deliver instruction; 31 percent report that use is limited or nonexistent. (Superintendents in rural districts are more likely than their urban or suburban counterparts to say “limited or no use” of blended learning – 37 percent rural and 34 percent small town, compared with 23 percent urban and 24 percent suburban.)

☞ *Blended learning in Ohio is by no means extensive but it does seem to be emergent.*

Few of the comments in the focus groups or written survey comments addressed blended learning, another indication that it remains an emerging issue. One superintendent did make a point of saying that it is something that takes time and training to do well: “I have teachers ready for pedagogical change, but they need time. Until I can organizationally create the time and space and structure for them.... Blended environment takes a lot of time.”

“Credit Flex”

Ohio’s credit flexibility policy allows students to earn credits by proving mastery of course content outside the traditional classroom setting. It is relatively well-regarded and ranks third on the list of nine reforms that superintendents rated as leading to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s K-12 education (46 percent rated it a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Yet superintendents report that their districts make limited use of it. More than half (52 percent) say that few or none of the students in their districts use credit flexibility; 44 percent say some students use it, and 4 percent say many. (Superintendents in rural districts are more likely than their urban or suburban counterparts to say “few or none” of their students use credit flexibility – 61 percent rural and 57 percent small town, compared with 44 percent urban and 41 percent suburban.)

There is some question as to whether credit flexibility is used as intended, which was “to broaden the scope of curricular options available to students, increase the depth of study possible for a particular subject, and allow tailoring of learning time and/or conditions”* – or if it’s utilized more for making up course work.

Among those who say that some or many of the students in their district use it, the verdict is that credit flexibility is evenly split for both uses: 23 percent “mostly to make up courses that students failed or didn’t complete”; 26 percent “mostly to take advanced courses online”; and 41 percent “both about equally.”

Policy #7: Charter Schools and Vouchers

Charter schools and vouchers are the bottom two on the list of nine potential reforms that superintendents rated as likely to fundamentally improve Ohio’s K-12 education (just 2 percent rated each a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Seven out of ten superintendents gave them a 1 on the scale – meaning that these reform efforts “won’t improve things at all” (70 percent for charter schools and 71 percent for vouchers).

There seems to be no end to the debate as to whether charter schools offer a viable alternative for students who attend a failing public school or whether they denote thousands of dollars and students being siphoned away from traditional school districts. According to these findings, superintendents land solidly on the latter side of this debate. The survey posed the following question: Which

* Ohio Department of Education/State Board of Education “Ohio’s Credit Flexibility Plan,” see <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1427&ContentID=61432>

comes closer to your view about the impact of charter schools in the areas where they are prevalent?

Fully 53 percent say that charter schools “have hurt traditional school districts and worsened education for students.” About one-third (31 percent) say their impact has been mixed. Just 4 percent believe that charter schools “have pushed traditional school districts to improve and fight harder for students.” (Another 11 percent say they have not had much effect.)

☞ *There seems to be special unease about virtual charter schools... As one superintendent wrote, “Blended learning or e-learning at districts with oversight are good things. E-schools as charter schools are not.”*

Several comments in the survey indicate that the fundamental concern superintendents have about charter schools has less to do with the concept than with the state’s ability to hold them accountable for student learning. There seems to be special unease about virtual charter schools, which now serve more than 30,000 Ohio students and account for much of the growth of new charter schools in the state.*

As one superintendent wrote, “Blended learning or e-learning at districts with oversight are good things. E-schools as charter schools are not. They lack oversight and lead to systematic abuse that is ultimately the public schools’ responsibility. Privatizing and charter schools are not the answer! Not even close.”

* Yan Lu and Molly Bloom, “Growth of charter schools in Ohio,” StateImpact Ohio, a reporting project of local public media and NPR, accessed December 18, 2012, <http://stateimpact.npr.org/ohio/2012/12/18/growth-of-charter-schools-in-ohio-2/>

THE POLITICS OF REFORM

Tough choices and difficult tradeoffs are the domain of school superintendents who are at the vortex of a long list of pressure groups and power centers – governments, in-district constituencies, associations, business leaders, reform advocates, and more – all vying to influence what happens in their districts. We designed several items in the questionnaire that forced superintendents to choose between two strongly worded options. Our intent was to derive a segment of district leaders we could identify as “Reformers.”*

Are the Challenges of Urban Districts Driving Too Many Policies?

Before education reform can be seen as relevant to a broad swath of districts, a superintendent has to believe that education’s challenges are widespread, not narrow. For example, if the only troubled school districts in Ohio are in the large urban centers or poor rural areas, everyone else can rest easy. While 52 percent say most challenges are confined to these areas, an impressive 44 percent believes that they are widespread and that “even suburban, affluent districts could be doing a lot better.”

More than one survey respondent expressed concern that policies are driven by the problems facing urban districts. “Charter schools, vouchers [sic] have the potential to improve struggling urban schools – but not suburban or rural schools,” wrote one superintendent. In a focus group, a superintendent used the Third Grade Reading Guarantee as illustration saying, “It’s just another example of reform initiatives being one size fits all. This is not really needed for suburban districts, it’s needed for large urban districts or southeastern Ohio. They’re painting with a broad brush.”

But other superintendents thought the challenges facing education were widespread, driven by global changes in the economy and in technology – and in how students learn. “Our system is not keeping pace with the rate of change in the world,” said one superintendent.

One might have expected to see suburban superintendents point to urban or rural districts as the problem areas, so it’s interesting to note that urban, suburban and rural superintendents are essentially split between whether education challenges in Ohio are limited to large urban and rural poor districts or more widespread.

(Q3)

DIFFERENCES BY URBANICITY

If you absolutely had to choose between these two statements, which would you say is CLOSEST to your view?

Total	Urban	Sub	SmTn	Rural
(344)	(64)	(84)	(47)	(147)

Most of Ohio’s education challenges can be found in its large, urban districts and/or its rural, poor districts

52%	44%	55%	62%	50%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Ohio’s education challenges are widespread – even suburban, affluent districts could be doing a lot better

44%	53%	42%	28%	46%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Stuck in Old Ways?

The vast majority of district superintendents (69 percent) believes that the public schools are “keeping up with a changing world” and giving most students a good education. Suburban superintendents (56 percent) are less likely to feel this way in comparison with urban (70 percent), small town (70 percent), and rural (75 percent) superintendents.

“If we don’t change and evolve our classrooms and our teachers and ourselves, we’re going to be left behind and we’re going to see students leaving us for alternatives in education.”

– Ohio superintendent

Still, a sizable minority overall – 30 percent – takes the opposite view, believing that the schools are “stuck in old ways of doing things” and must change to stay relevant. As one superintendent explained, “If we don’t change and evolve our classrooms and our teachers and ourselves, we’re going to be left behind and we’re going to see students leaving us for alternatives in education.”

* We received a handful of telephone calls and emails from those who felt they could not choose on those few questions that offered no middle ground between two strong views. Our apologies to them for being provocative, and our thanks to those 344 superintendents who did participate.

Many superintendents are critical of some of their colleagues on this point, with 39 percent saying “too many of my fellow superintendents are content with traditional ways of delivering education” comes very or somewhat close to their view. In contrast, just 15 percent acknowledge that they themselves “have been too content with traditional ways of delivering education when [they] should have been shaking things up.”

A superintendent, talking about the imminent new teacher evaluation system, acknowledged that change was necessary but added, “What they created isn’t the right solution. I probably should’ve worked harder to move some (poorly performing teachers) along – collective bargaining caused some of this.”

Two out of three (67 percent) say that “too many of my fellow superintendents and their boards of education have given away too much in terms of contract language.” But just 14 percent say that they themselves have personally “given away too much” during their own careers.

Define “Reform”

As superintendents began to discuss the changes that need to happen in K-12 systems, it became apparent that even when there is consensus on the need for change, people can go in many different directions in search of that change.

Reforms mean different things in different places. “The things that are adding to fundamental improvement are the local initiatives that we are implementing,” a superintendent wrote. “We study our data and make decisions for our district based upon what we know our students need for an improved educational experience...Clearly, the initiatives that make the biggest difference are those that we instigate and implement locally based on our needs and not the needs of a large urban district.”

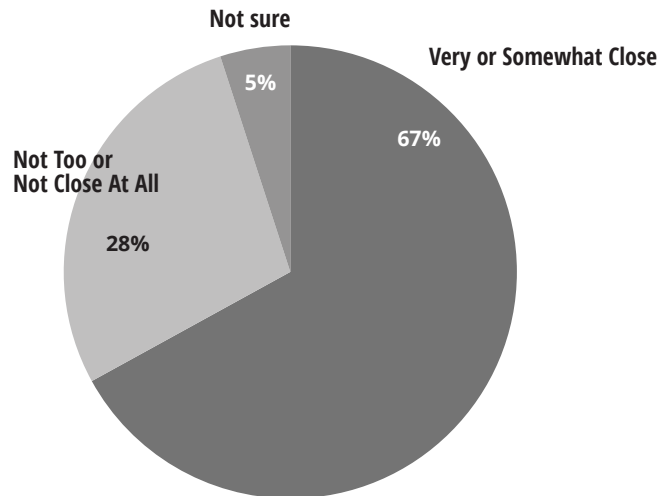
Several ideas for structural changes that superintendents thought could lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s K-12 education system came up in the focus groups:

“I don’t know why we’re still doing this in a 185 days a year – how can any company do the job being absent for 2.5 months?”

“Shift from a seat time credit acquisition for graduation to a system that tracks competency in the form of credentials and badges aligned to workforce readiness needs.”

(Q31)
SUPERINTENDENTS GIVE AWAY TOO MUCH

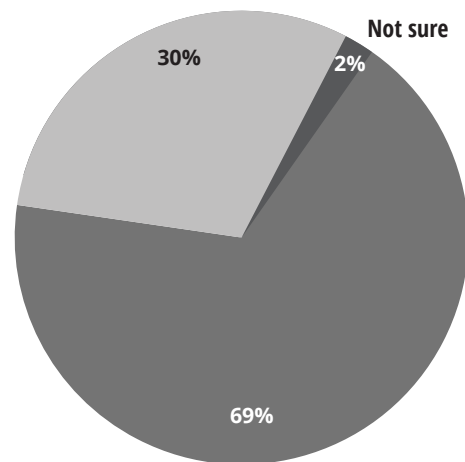
How close does this statement come to your view?
 Too many of my fellow superintendents and their boards of education have given away too much in terms of contract language



(Q1)
POLITICS OF REFORM

If you absolutely had to choose between these two statements, which would you say is CLOSEST to your view?

Public education is stuck in old ways of doing things. It must transform to stay relevant – changes in technology, the economy and student choice require it.



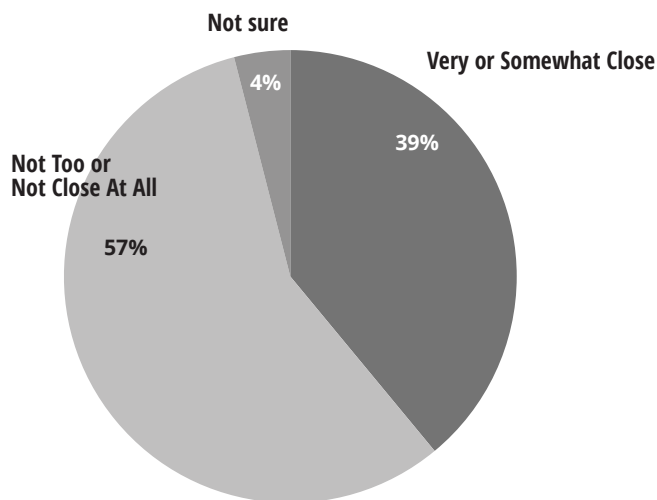
Public education is doing a good job of keeping up with a changing world. It has given most students a good education and will continue to do so.

“Collaborative efforts with higher education – students should be graduating from high school with a minimum of one year of college credit.”

(Q33)

STATUS QUO PREVAILS

How close does this statement come to your view?
Too many of my fellow superintendents are content with traditional ways of delivering education



The Contrarians

Given that the meaning of change can vary so much, it was unfeasible to derive from the survey results an attitudinal mind-set that could categorize a segment of superintendents as “Reformers.” But the survey does reveal a segment of superintendents whose mind-set suggests impatience with the status quo – and even with its own profession.

From criticizing Ohio superintendents for failing to lead, to being open to vouchers and charter schools, they are by definition a small minority holding views and issue positions that run counter to most of their colleagues. To be sure, only 9 percent of the superintendents fall into this group we call the “Contrarians.” To belong to this segment, a superintendent responded as follows in at least three of these five items:

- That Ohio’s elected officials intervene with education policies because education professionals have too often failed to lead and do their job.
- That vouchers will lead to fundamental improvement in Ohio’s K-12 education system.

- That the impact of charter schools has been to push traditional school districts to improve and fight harder for students (or that the impact has been mixed).
- That the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is necessary because some districts were not doing the job and so this law forces all districts to focus on struggling readers earlier.
- That too many superintendents are content with traditional ways of delivering education.

At the other end of the scale, 38 percent of superintendents do not hold any of the above views (our comparisons below will be to these non-Contrarians) while 53 percent hold one or two.

How Do the Contrarians Differ?

When it comes to demographics – at both the personal and district level – the Contrarians are mostly similar to their colleagues. They’re not more likely to be younger or older nor to work in smaller or larger districts. But leaders of suburban districts are somewhat more likely to be among the Contrarians (16 percent) than those leading small town, rural or urban districts (2 percent, 8 percent and 8 percent, respectively).

Contrarians stand out mostly in their attitudes. They are far more likely than non-Contrarians to say that public education is stuck and “must transform to stay relevant,” a 70 percent to 16 percent difference. Contrarians are also far more likely to think most of Ohio’s education challenges are widespread and include suburban affluent districts, rather than limited to large cities or poor rural areas. Here the difference is 63 percent to 37 percent.

The survey does reveal a segment of superintendents whose mind-set suggests impatience with the status quo.

Not surprisingly, their broad attitudinal orientation – ‘we need to shake things up’ – translates into stronger support for specific reforms. For example, Contrarians are more upbeat about using value-added assessments in teacher evaluations: By an 87 percent to 67 percent margin they are more likely than non-Contrarians to think it will become accepted practice in the next few years.

And, they are less likely than non-Contrarians to foresee problems in implementing value-added assessments in teacher evaluations in some subjects, a 60 percent to 86 percent difference. Moreover, Contrarians are far less likely than non-Contrarians to believe the teacher observation requirements will put too much pressure on principals (57 percent versus 91 percent).

Contrarians also view Ohio’s Third Grade Reading Guarantee with more promise than their peers. A far greater percentage believes the policy will remain in force in the next five years (43 percent to 6 percent). Fewer believe the reading guarantee will have no impact on early identification of struggling readers (37 percent to 61 percent). Similarly, fewer believe it will have no impact on retentions in the earlier grades (17 percent to 33 percent).

In fact, Contrarians are generally more hopeful about important reforms regarding school choice and standards and accountability. They are more likely – in some cases

far more likely – to think each of nine specific reforms will fundamentally change K-12 education in Ohio (rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale):

Nine specific reforms will fundamentally change K-12 education in Ohio (rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale):

	Contrarian (30)	Non-Contrarian (132)
Implementation of CCSS	70%	67%
Blended Learning	70%	51%
Teacher evaluation value added	63%	34%
Credit Flexibility	60%	44%
Third Grade Reading Guarantee	50%	10%
Open enrollment	27%	19%
Publicized A to F ratings	20%	5%
Vouchers	17%	-
Charter Schools	10%	2%

CONCLUSION: TIME TO TALK?

Once the focal point moves beyond the popular Common Core State Standards, there is scant enthusiasm and in some cases a fair degree of discontent among Ohio's superintendents over implementing other K-12 reforms. Moreover, the one-on-one interviews, the focus groups, and the survey results themselves convey the distinct feeling that a chasm exists between Ohio's front-line superintendents, its policymakers, and education reformers.

In all likelihood, some legislators will periodically make it their business to reach out to district leaders for a reality check. Several superintendents told us that they get a respectful hearing when they approach local representatives to voice concerns. And Contrarian superintendents are bound to be good allies for education reformers.

But overall, there appears to be a good deal of mistrust and aggrieved feelings hanging over what Ohio's state government does and does not do and how superintendents react. The lines of communication – and perhaps trust – between front-line district leaders, state policymakers, and education reformers seem frayed. As one superintendent put it:

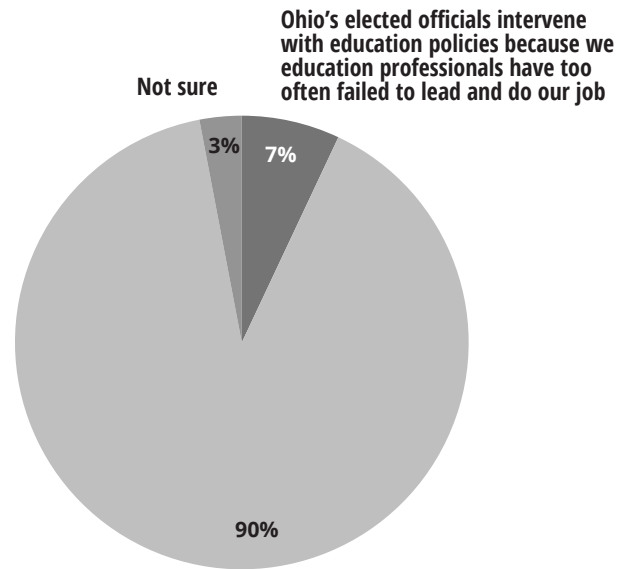
“Fundamental improvement will take place when educators are included in the creation of initiatives; supported as the professionals they are; given an opportunity to implement and refine the initiatives that have been crafted in collaboration with them; and are no longer the pawns in the ‘special interest initiative’ game.”

The overwhelming majority of superintendents – 90 percent – say that “too often, Ohio's elected officials make education policy to score political points” instead of deferring to the expertise of the educators. Nine in ten (90 percent) also say that when it comes to debate on educational initiatives, it's generally better for superintendents in Ohio to “speak up publicly and press their collective viewpoint at the state level – otherwise, policy will be made without their input.”

(Q2)

LET US DO OUR JOB

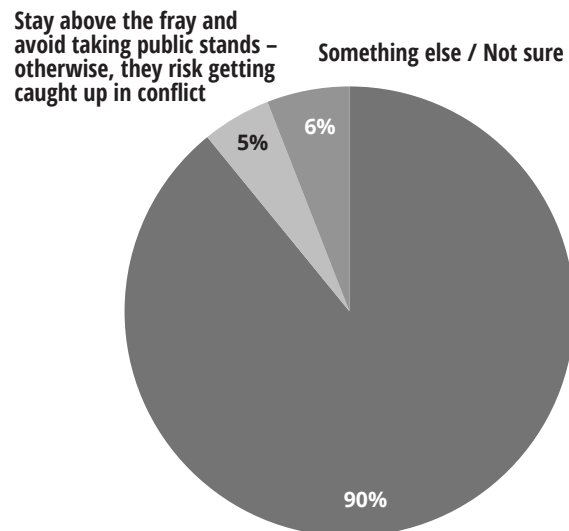
If you absolutely had to choose between these two statements, which would you say is closest to your view?



Too often, Ohio's elected officials make education policy to score political points – the politicians should let the education professionals do our job

(Q30)

When it comes to debate on educational initiatives, do you think that it's generally better for Ohio's district superintendents to:



Speak up publicly and press their collective viewpoint at the state level – otherwise, policy will be made without their input

In our interviews, some superintendents acknowledged that there have been times when they themselves failed to lead in areas that were their responsibility, in effect inviting others to do so. One superintendent found fault with his profession, believing that the new teacher evaluation system was created by a legislature fed up with districts holding on to less than qualified teachers:

“Our failure to change caused this to happen – we didn’t clean our own house. Now somebody else has put a process in. The reality is that we weren’t taking the time to have those pre- and post- conversations, or I couldn’t keep them in school long enough to discuss data with them. Now this forces people to have those conversations. They [legislators] are not doing it because of collective bargaining, they’re doing it because we didn’t clean our own house.”

And there are times when elected officials acknowledge that they, too, fail to follow through with the policies they enact. One legislator we interviewed in preparation for the study had this to say: “Will the legislature back down from the Third Grade Reading Guarantee? Districts push back and the legislature backs off. It’s always possible that they won’t stick with their guns, though we have strong leadership this time. But implementation was also a lack of leadership for five years. The department of education has been dealing with changing governors, the direction keeps changing, they need a consistent, steady hand.”

Meanwhile, the orientation of superintendents toward charter schools is likely disappointing to charter school advocates. Those advocates might point out the virtues of charter schools as a go-to option to superintendents anxious for greater managerial freedom over staff and educational strategies. But the proportion of superinten-

dents who say they have actually converted a traditional school into a charter school is a mere 3 percent in our survey. Somehow superintendents – those educators with the most experience in what it takes to run, staff and set expectations for schools – may have been overlooked as possible initiators of the charter school option.

🗨️ *The gap between Ohio’s professional educators and its elected officials, both of whom are entrusted with upholding the public interest, has not been bridged.*

Or maybe they have actively avoided it. Either way, perhaps this is because Ohio’s charter school effort has been framed as something “done to” traditional school districts, a punishment for old ways of doing things, rather than an inducement to try a different approach. In any case, it may be time for proponents and superintendents to have a fresh discussion about the charter school strategy.

One superintendent made a call for an “honest and open dialogue” between superintendents and policymakers. The traditional modes of communication – testimony in front of committees, private meetings, advisory panels and conferences – have their place. But the gap between Ohio’s professional educators and its elected officials, both of whom are entrusted with upholding the public interest, has not been bridged. Conceivably, it’s time for a different kind of “honest and open” discussion, the kind that will move the politics of reform forward.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

For *Half Empty or Half Full*, all 614 K-12 local public school district superintendents in Ohio were invited to participate in an online survey; the findings in this report are based on 344 completed surveys. The survey was conducted by the Farkas Duffett Research Group (FDR Group) for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. It was fielded between March 21 and April 9, 2013. The margin of error* is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points; it is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups. The survey was preceded by two focus groups with district superintendents and eight in-depth interviews with a variety of people knowledgeable about K-12 education in Ohio.

The Survey

The questionnaire was designed and programmed to be completed online. It included more than 50 substantive items. Each superintendent was provided a confidential and unique survey link to ensure 1) authenticity of the data and 2) that each potential respondent could complete the survey only once. The list of local district superintendents was obtained by the Ohio Department of Education's Ohio Educational Directory System Interactive, <http://education.ohio.gov>.

An initial email message was sent to 614 superintendents on March 21, 2013, and a follow-up email message on March 25; a reminder telephone call was made on April 1 or 2 to those who had not responded to the email messages. The result is 344 completed interviews (307 from email messages, 37 from reminder telephone call), for a 56% response rate.

When the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the FDR Group teamed up in 2010 to survey Ohio education leaders for *Yearning to Break Free: Ohio Superintendents Speak Out*, we encountered several technical barriers to reaching potential respondents. For example, Internet firewalls at some school districts blocked email messages, and many messages reached SPAM folders only to remain unopened.

From that research effort we also learned that superintendents

prized confidentiality, that they are too often bombarded with online surveys, that they are more likely to respond to surveys originating from a trusted source, and that above all they are protective of their time. Taking all of these learnings into account, the Fordham Institute enlisted the support of Kirk Hamilton, Executive Director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), who lent his support to the survey and encouraged superintendents to participate. We are grateful to Dr. Hamilton for putting his imprimatur on both the survey and the research effort overall, and for Denise Hall of BASA for orchestrating the process of sending e-mail messages to the universe of Ohio school superintendents.

Non-sampling sources of error could have an impact on survey results. To mitigate this, the survey instrument was pre-tested with superintendents to ensure that the language was accessible and appropriate. Questions were randomized and answer categories rotated. The FDR Group crafted the questionnaire; managed the pre-testing, online programming and fielding; and is solely responsible for the interpretation and analysis of survey findings contained within this report.

Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews

Prior to the design of the survey questionnaire, two focus groups were conducted with district superintendents. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain firsthand understanding of what superintendents were thinking, to develop new hypotheses based on their input, and to design the survey items using language and terms these education professionals would be comfortable with. Quotes in the report are drawn either directly from the focus group discussions or from verbatim responses entered for open-end questions in the online survey. Both focus groups were moderated by Steve Farkas of the FDR Group.

In addition to the focus groups, eight in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with a variety of leaders in Ohio K-12. The information gathered in these interviews was used to inform the survey instrument, the fielding process and the focus groups.

* This assumes that the non-response error is random.

APPENDIX B: COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS

Ohio Superintendents Complete Survey Results

Survey conducted online March 21, 2013 – April 9, 2013

Margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points

Percentages do not always total to 100 percent due to rounding

A dash signifies zero; an asterisk signifies less than .5%

1.

If you absolutely had to choose between these two statements, which would you say is CLOSEST to your view?

69% Public education is doing a good job of keeping up with a changing world. It has given most students a good education and will continue to do so.

Or

30% Public education is stuck in old ways of doing things. It must transform to stay relevant – changes in technology, the economy and student choice require it.

2% Not sure

2.

And, if you absolutely had to choose between these two statements, which would you say is CLOSEST to your view?

7% Ohio's elected officials intervene with education policies because we education professionals have too often failed to lead and do our job

Or

90% Too often, Ohio's elected officials make education policy to score political points – the politicians should let the education professionals do our job

3% Not sure

3.

And, if you absolutely had to choose between these last two statements, which would you say is CLOSEST to your view?

52% Most of Ohio's education challenges can be found in its large, urban districts and/or its rural, poor districts

Or

44% Ohio's education challenges are widespread – even suburban, affluent districts could be doing a lot better

5% Not sure

4.

Would you say that going through the licensure process in Ohio guarantees that a teacher:

11% (5% 2011) Is well-prepared to succeed in the classroom

Or

63% (55% 2011) At least starts with a base-line of acceptable quality

Or

25% (39% 2011) Has done little more than gone through procedural compliance

2% (2% 2011) Not sure

5.

In Ohio, schools and districts are evaluated by how well students do on standardized tests, and the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action. Do you think that using test scores this way:

41% (30% 2011) Is mostly HARMFUL because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure

Or

49% (57% 2011) Is mostly GOOD because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed

10% (13% 2011) Not sure

6.

A lot of changes are taking place in Ohio's K-12 education system. Please rate each of the following on a 1-to-5 scale, where 5 means you think it's leading to fundamental improvement and 1 means it won't improve things at all.

a. Charter schools

70% 1

24% 2

4% 3

2% Net 4&5

2% 4

1% 5

* Not sure

b. Flex credit

11%	1
14%	2
29%	3
46%	Net 4&5
31%	4
15%	5
1%	Not sure

c. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

3%	1
6%	2
22%	3
68%	Net 4&5
40%	4
28%	5
2%	Not sure

d. Blended learning

3%	1
8%	2
27%	3
59%	Net 4&5
36%	4
24%	5
2%	Not sure

e. Open enrollment

28%	1
21%	2
28%	3
22%	Net 4&5
16%	4
6%	5
1%	Not sure

f. Publicized A-to-F ratings of school districts and buildings

49%	1
25%	2
17%	3
8%	Net 4&5
7%	4
2%	5
1%	Not sure

g. Teacher evaluations that integrate value-added assessments

14%	1
13%	2
31%	3
42%	Net 4&5
30%	4
12%	5
-	Not sure

h. Third Grade Reading Guarantee

26%	1
29%	2
25%	3
20%	Net 4&5
14%	4
6%	5
*	Not sure

i. Vouchers

71%	1
23%	2
4%	3
2%	Net 4&5
2%	4
1%	5
-	Not sure

7.

Over your years as a school superintendent in Ohio, have you undertaken any of the following? Check all that apply.

- 6% Breaking up a high school into separate, independent academies
- 3% Converting a traditional school into a charter school
- 36% Developing an alternative or vocational school or program
- 61% None of the above
- 1% Not sure

8.

Which best describes your district when it comes to including value-added assessments in teacher evaluations?

- 17% My district has already put policies and procedures into place
- Or
- 77% My district is currently reviewing our options and working toward agreement
- Or
- 4% My district will soon start working on the issue
- 1% Something else
- 1% Not sure

9. Does your district's collective bargaining agreement contain language that conflicts with the use of students' test scores when evaluating teachers, or not?

30% Yes, it contains conflicting language
66% No, it does not
5% Not sure

10. When it comes to incorporating value-added assessments in evaluating Ohio's teachers, how likely is each of the following to happen?

a. It will prove too difficult to implement student growth measures for some subjects

85% NET LIKELY
44% Very Likely
41% Somewhat Likely
11% Not Too Likely
4% Not Likely At All
2% Not Sure

b. Ohio will postpone and may even cancel implementation of this policy

39% NET LIKELY
7% Very Likely
32% Somewhat Likely
39% Not Too Likely
13% Not Likely At All
9% Not Sure

c. The teacher observation requirements will put too much pressure on principals

86% NET LIKELY
54% Very Likely
32% Somewhat Likely
11% Not Too Likely
3% Not Likely At All
1% Not Sure

d. The use of student growth measures in teacher evaluations will become accepted practice in the next few years

73% NET LIKELY
19% Very Likely
54% Somewhat Likely
15% Not Too Likely
8% Not Likely At All
4% Not Sure

e. There will be widespread legal challenges when decisions on teacher pay and employment are based on assessments

93% NET LIKELY
67% Very Likely
26% Somewhat Likely
4% Not Too Likely
- Not Likely At All
3% Not Sure

11. Which do you think will be the bigger obstacle to implementing student growth in teacher evaluations?

66% Inadequate tests and other technical implementation issues
Or
26% Political resistance from teachers and their associations
5% Something else
3% Not sure

12. How serious a problem is each of the following in your district when it comes to implementing the Common Core State Standards?

a. The absence of the PARCC assessments, making preparation for the standards difficult

87% NET SERIOUS
43% Very Serious
44% Somewhat Serious
10% Not Too Serious
1% Not Serious At All
2% Not Sure

b. Getting buy-in for the standards among key stakeholders

37% NET SERIOUS
8% Very Serious
29% Somewhat Serious
45% Not Too Serious
17% Not Serious At All
1% Not Sure

c. Having sufficient computers and technological capacity to administer the PARCC assessments

77% NET SERIOUS
49% Very Serious
28% Somewhat Serious
16% Not Too Serious
7% Not Serious At All
* Not Sure

d. Training teachers to teach to the standards

- 47% NET SERIOUS
- 11% Very Serious
- 35% Somewhat Serious
- 39% Not Too Serious
- 14% Not Serious At All
- * Not Sure

13.

About what proportion of the teachers in your district would you say have undergone professional development and are now prepared to teach to the Common Core State Standards?

- 37% Virtually all
- 27% More than 75%
- 22% 50-75%
- 14% Less than 50%
- 1% Not sure

14.

To what extent has the English/language arts curriculum in your district been revised to align with the Common Core State Standards?

- 26% Completely
- 73% In progress
- 1% Not yet started
- 1% Not sure

15.

To what extent has the math curriculum in your district been revised to align with the Common Core State Standards?

- 23% Completely
- 77% In progress
- * Not yet started
- * Not sure

16.

Five years down the line, do you think that the Common Core State Standards:

- 81% Will be widely and routinely in use in Ohio
- Or
- 10% Will have faded away by then
- 9% Not sure

17.

There are some areas in Ohio where charter schools are commonplace. Which comes closer to your view about the impact of charter schools in those areas? [We realize you may or may not support charter schools in general.]

- 4% They have pushed traditional school districts to im-

prove and fight harder for students

- Or
- 53% They have hurt traditional school districts and worsened education for students
- Or
- 31% Their impact has been mixed
- Or
- 11% They have not had much effect
- 2% Not sure

18.

How much use does your district make of blended learning to deliver instruction?

- 31% Limited or no use
- 64% Some use
- 5% Widespread use
- * Not sure

19.

How many students in your district use flex credit?

- 52% Few or none
- 44% Some students
- 4% Many students
- * Not sure

Limited base: Some or many students use flex credit (n=163)

20.

Of the students who do use flex credit, is it:

- 23% Mostly to make up courses that students failed or didn't complete
- Or
- 26% Mostly to take advanced courses online
- 41% Both about equally
- 10% Not sure

21.

Which comes closer to your view on Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?

- 15% The policy is necessary because some districts were not doing the job and this forces all districts to focus on struggling readers earlier
- Or
- 81% This policy imposes unnecessary burdens on most districts that were already doing all they could
- 4% Not sure

22.

Has the Third Grade Reading Guarantee caused your district to implement any new interventions or policies, or did the things your district had in place already meet the law's requirements?

46% It has caused implementation of new interventions or policies

51% Things district had in place already met law's requirements

3% Not sure

23.

How much does the Third Grade Reading Guarantee push your district to do each of the following – does it push your district to do a lot more, a little more, or is there no impact because your district is already doing as much as it could?

a. Early identification and intervention for students struggling with reading

15% Pushes District A Lot More

31% Pushes District A Little More

53% No Impact

1% Not Sure

b. Ensuring that teachers in the earlier grades are certified in reading

47% Pushes District A Lot More

32% Pushes District A Little More

20% No Impact

1% Not Sure

c. Fast and systematic parental notification when children struggle with reading

17% Pushes District A Lot More

43% Pushes District A Little More

38% No Impact

2% Not Sure

d. Filing waivers for teachers who lack reading certification

44% Pushes District A Lot More

28% Pushes District A Little More

23% No Impact

5% Not Sure

e. Retaining students in the earlier grades if they are below grade level in reading

30% Pushes District A Lot More

35% Pushes District A Little More

32% No Impact

3% Not Sure

24.

Five years down the line, do you think that the Third Grade Reading Guarantee:

16% Will be in force in Ohio

Or

77% Will be scaled back substantially because of concerns about high rates of retention

7% Not sure

25.

Does your district currently operate under:

12% A limited open enrollment policy

70% A total open enrollment policy

17% Not participating at all

1% Not sure

26.

If (or when) your district adopted an open enrollment policy, do you think it would experience (or did it experience):

65% A net gain of students

21% A net loss of students

10% No difference in the number of students

4% Not sure

27.

Do you think of open enrollment as:

65% A serious option your district should pursue (or keep)

Or

24% Something you would recommend avoiding

11% Not sure

28.

Is yours a Race to the Top school district, or not?

47% Yes

54% No, it is not

Limited base: Race to the Top District (n=160)

29.

Would you say that Race to the Top:

42% Has led to long lasting changes in your district

9% That its effects were temporary

48% That it's too early to say

1% Not sure

30.

When it comes to debate on educational initiatives, do you think that it's generally better for Ohio's district superintendents to:

90% Speak up publicly and press their collective viewpoint at the state level – otherwise, policy will be made without their input

Or

5% Stay above the fray and avoid taking public stands – otherwise, they risk getting caught up in conflict

4% Something else

2% Not sure

31.

How close does this statement come to your view?

Too many of my fellow superintendents and their boards of education have given away too much in terms of contract language

67% NET CLOSE

31% Very close

36% Somewhat close

18% Not too close

10% Not close at all

5% Not sure

32.

Thinking back on your own career, do you think you personally have given away too much in terms of contract language, or not?

14% Yes, I have

76% No, I have not

11% Not sure

33.

How close does this statement come to your view? Too many of my fellow superintendents are content with traditional ways of delivering education

39% NET CLOSE

12% Very close

27% Somewhat close

35% Not too close

22% Not close at all

4% Not sure

34.

Thinking back on your own career, do you think you personally have been too content with traditional ways of delivering education when you should have been shaking things up, or not?

15% Yes, I have

81% No, I have not

5% Not sure

[Demographics]

35.

For how many years have you been the superintendent of your current public school district?

33% 1-2

42% 3-7

20% 8-15

6% 16 or more years

36.

For how many years in total have you been a public school district superintendent?

20% 1-2

36% 3-7

30% 8-15

14% 16 or more years

37.

Is your age:

7% Under 40

56% 40-54

37% 55 or over

38.

Would you say you intend to retire:

36% Within the next 3 years

26% Within the next 4-9 years

35% In 10 years or more

3% Not sure

Gender

85% (83% 2011) Male

15% (17% 2011) Female

Urbanicity

19% (19% 2011) Urban

24% (19% 2011) Suburban

14% (13% 2011) Small town

43% (49% 2011) Rural

ODE rating

64% (49% 2011) Excellent with Distinction/Excellent

27% (40% 2011) Effective

9% (11% 2011) Continuous Improvement/Academic Watch/Academic Emergency

Enrollment

34% (31% 2011) 1,200 or less

34% (41% 2011) 1,201-2,500

31% (28% 2011) 2,501+

% economic disadvantaged

21% (27% 2011) 0-25%

52% (50% 2011) 26-50%

27% (22% 2011) 51%+



37 W. Broad Street, Suite 400
Columbus, OH 43215
614-223-1580
www.edexcellence.net/ohio