

An Open Letter to Ohio's Education Policy Leaders

Build equity and increase P-20 alignment in Ohio so every student can succeed.

For much of the 20th century, Ohio had no consistent expectations, or standards, for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level or to graduate from high school. What students learned was largely up to individual school leaders and teachers and varied considerably across schools and districts. There were no state assessments and no school district or building report cards.

In those days, Ohio and the nation enjoyed an economy that abounded with jobs that relied more on physical strength rather than knowledge and skills. A student could graduate high school and find a good-paying job at the local automobile factory, the farm, the steel mills of Northeast Ohio or the coal mines of Appalachia and be set for life. Those days are long gone.

Ohio's economy has shifted to a knowledge economy that is driven by highly technical, highly skilled jobs that require education and training beyond high school. According to a study by the Georgetown

University Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2020, 64 percent of all jobs in the economy will require post-secondary education and training beyond high school. Ohio's students must be prepared to succeed in those jobs.

Over the past 20 years, Ohio has strived to build an education system to meet the needs of all students. After initial success, Ohio has been falling behind other states in recent years. In 2008, *Education Week's* Quality Counts report ranked Ohio's education system seventh in the nation; by 2018, Ohio had slipped to 22nd.

Persistent achievement gaps are a challenge that has emerged across the state. Gaps between different income and race/ethnicity groups affect how students experience school and the quality of education they receive. For example, 68.1 percent of White students scored proficient or better on the state's math assessments in 2018. Only 47.2 percent of Hispanic students and 31.6 percent of Black students scored



P-20 VISION

Each and every Ohio student is actively engaged in their learning, has access to high-quality education opportunities in early childhood, K-12 and post-secondary education and is prepared to enter the workforce and succeed in life.

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proficient or better on the same math assessments. In 2018, 48.4 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored proficient on English assessments. Compare this to 79.2 percent for students who are not economically disadvantaged.

These gaps include assessment scores but also include access to educational opportunities, discipline enforcement and graduation rates. These gaps then persist beyond school. Researchers suggest that Ohio's economy would have been \$36.88 billion larger in 2015 if the state had addressed racial gaps in income.

It will take a focused and deliberate effort by all stakeholders in the P-20 system to close these gaps. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) worked with stakeholders over the past year to develop a comprehensive strategic plan, which Philanthropy Ohio recommended in 2016. The plan defines equity in education for the state and includes equity as its first

core principle.

Other state agencies representing early childhood education, post-secondary education, health and mental health and other support services should work with ODE to make sure state investments in all of our agencies are working together to create a cohesive system that meets the comprehensive needs of all students.

With new policy leadership in the statehouse and governor's office in 2019 comes an opportunity for policymakers to renew their commitment to increased system alignment and equitable outcomes. To inform this work, Philanthropy Ohio has developed a series of briefs covering the most pressing elements of the education system. These briefs include context on the issue and focused recommendations on how each partner in the system can improve outcomes for all students.

Philanthropy Ohio's Education Briefs

1. **Early Childhood Education.** Invest in high-quality early childhood education.
2. **Standards and Assessments.** Form the foundation of an equitable education system in Ohio.
3. **Measures and Accountability.** Ensure all K-12 students in Ohio receive the education they deserve.
4. **School Improvement and Turnaround.** All Ohio students, no matter their zip codes, deserve access to high-performing schools.
5. **Teacher/Leader Effectiveness.** Strengthen the primary drivers of student success: teachers and principals.
6. **Graduation Requirements.** High schools set the stage for a student's future success.
7. **Post-secondary Education.** Raise education achievement levels after high school.



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Empowering Change

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ABOUT PHILANTHROPY OHIO

Philanthropy Ohio is an association of foundations, corporate giving programs, individuals and organizations actively involved in philanthropy in Ohio. Its mission is to lead and equip Ohio philanthropy to be effective, powerful change agents in our communities. It provides the network, tools and knowledge to help people engaged in philanthropy become more effective, powerful change agents in their communities. Together, its more than 220 members hold over \$50 billion in assets and provide over \$4 billion in grants to nonprofit organizations that work to improve the lives of community residents.