

The Governor's Conversation on Education

In his state of the state address the Governor laid out the following principles, which will guide the reform:

The vision for our schools:

We must create learning environments that foster and nurture creativity, innovation, and global competency.

The core principles to guide our work to achieve that vision:

First, we cannot address our education challenges without strengthening our commitment to public education. As a practical matter, the vast majority of Ohio children are and always will be educated in the public school system.

Second, a modern education must be directly linked to economic prosperity. Ohio cannot thrive without understanding that world class schools will produce a talented workforce, and a talented workforce will attract and create jobs.

Third, we need to identify the great strengths of our schools. There are features in our education system that the rest of the world seeks to emulate, and we must build on these triumphs.

We excel internationally in our ability to foster creativity and innovation. These skills fuel a lifetime of success, especially in an evolving global economy.

Ohio schools produced the minds that created Superman, with his fictional X-Ray vision, and the mind that invented the MRI, giving doctors the very real ability to painlessly view inside the human body. Ohioans are visionaries, but practical as well. It wasn't long after a pair of Ohioans invented the airplane that another Ohioan invented the parachute.

Our schools must teach students to think past the limits of what's been done, and imagine what could be done.

Fourth, our best teachers can show us what works best in the classroom. We need to consult them and follow their lead.

Great teachers can be a resource not only for their students but for their fellow educators. We should support these teachers by giving them the freedom to stay in the classroom and still be rewarded for sharing their expertise with their peers. We lose a lot of new teachers – as many as half of all new teachers leave the profession in the first 5 years – but we can help keep these talented people by giving them better access to senior colleagues.

Fifth, we must strive to develop a specific, personalized education program that identifies how each individual student learns and use the teaching methods appropriate to that student's needs and abilities.

The great educator and philosopher John Dewey described this idea many years ago. He wrote that we must shift "the center of gravity" in schools. It's a "revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical center shifted from the Earth to the sun. In this case, the child becomes the sun around which the appliances of education revolve."

And sixth, testing and assessment will continue to answer accountability questions. But their most important role will be to guide personalized and individualized education through a comprehensive and ongoing understanding of a student's capabilities and weaknesses and growth in the educational process.

The goal is:

Schools that rank among the best for the world and meet the needs of every Ohio child.

As part of the education reform process Governor Strickland will host 12 "Conversations on Education" throughout every region of Ohio. These meetings will begin in late July and continue through September. The conversations will focus on the six principles for education reform the governor laid out in his State of the State address as well as specific policy ideas for making sure that Ohio's schools are among the best in the world and meet the needs of every child.

At each regional forum, Governor Strickland will give local citizens the opportunity to share their thoughts and vet proposed ideas on creating a system of education that is innovative, personalized and linked to economic prosperity in Ohio. The meetings will be broadcast on local PBS stations and streamed live on the Web. Local citizens and educators not attending the event will be invited to gather for watch parties and provide feedback within their watch party and online in response to the Governor's meetings.

Concurrent with these forums, the Governor's education policy staff is meeting on a continual basis with associations, organizations and businesses that have an interest in education reform.

A second round of education forums will be held later in the fall of 2008 and will focus on how to properly finance a truly reformed system of education. The governor plans to introduce his education reform proposal in 2009.