



Dave Yost • Auditor of State

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Nine Schools “Scrubbers” in Statewide Attendance Audit

Yost Calls for Linking Attendance Reporting and Funding—No More “Count Week”

Columbus – Four additional school districts were identified as having manipulated attendance data in the final statewide student attendance audit report released today by Auditor of State Dave Yost: Canton City Schools, Cincinnati City Schools, Northridge Local Schools (Montgomery County) and Winton Woods City Schools (Hamilton County). Added to five districts identified in October, a total of nine districts statewide have been found to have “scrubbed” student attendance data.

The Auditor of State also made recommendations to the Ohio Department of Education and the General Assembly to improve the state’s system of accountability and data reporting.

Yost said the Ohio Department of Education should stop its current practice of passive oversight and instead actively monitor district reporting, with support from the General Assembly where necessary. Yost was particularly critical of state policy that leads to focusing on a single “count week” in October, and subsequent practices by districts to boost attendance during only that week, rather than through the entire year.

“Kids count every day, all year long,” Yost said. “They deserve better than what we’re giving them — Ohio’s current system for measuring attendance and performance is obsolete and in too many places, filled with error and bad information and even outright fraud. It’s amazing that it works at all, and sometimes, it doesn’t.”

In addition to changing count week from a one-time October practice to a year-long continuing practice, Yost also charged the Ohio Department of Education with the duty of more closely monitoring data collection and reporting. Currently, ODE relies upon an honor system of district self-reporting.

The report’s 13 recommendations are the following:

- Base State Funding on Year-long Attendance Counts
- Increase Oversight of School Districts
- Monitor Programs for At-Risk Students
- Increase EMIS Training
- Increase Use of Automation to Protect Data and Process Integrity
- Statewide Monitoring of Student Withdrawals
- Allow ODE access to Student Names (SSID) with privacy protections
- Establish Separate Tracking for Community School Withdrawals
- Protect Report Card Results from Security Vulnerabilities
- Centralize Accountability Resources Online
- Statewide Standards for Student Information System (SIS)
- Document Student Withdrawals
- Clarify Rules Over Withdrawal of Foreign Exchange Students

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Campbell, Cleveland, Columbus, Marion and Toledo school districts were identified in October as manipulating or scrubbing student attendance data. The recommendation to bring the statewide student identifier system in house at the Ohio Department of Education was also made in October, as part of the ongoing performance audit of the agency.

Auditor Yost's audit of attendance practices in Ohio's schools began when results of an internal audit at Columbus City Schools revealed irregular attendance and enrollment practices and similar allegations surfaced at Toledo Public Schools and Lockland City Schools. Today's report is the third and final phase of the investigation. A separate investigation of Columbus City Schools is ongoing.

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The Auditor of State's office, one of five independently elected statewide offices in Ohio, is responsible for auditing more than 5,600 state and local government agencies. Under the direction of Auditor Dave Yost, the office also provides financial services to local governments, investigates and prevents fraud in public agencies and promotes transparency in government.