

Hite, Turner say process behind Columbus plan should be replicated around State

A bipartisan pair on the Senate Education Committee said Wednesday the effort behind the creation of a Columbus schools education reform plan should be replicated across the state. Although he didn't push for the Columbus City Schools legislation (HB 167) to be applied to all districts in the state, Sen. Cliff Hite (R-Findlay) told the bill sponsors the next step is to get all factions in the room together to figure out how to keep doing something similar statewide. "I don't mean expand what you're doing – I understand the needs are different everywhere...I'm saying to get education to the point where we don't have to revisit things every month and every year and a half because of political changes and really come up with something good," he said. The lawmaker applauded the work of Rep. Cheryl Grossman (R-Grove City) and Rep. Tracy Heard (D-Columbus) on the Columbus Plan and Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) and Sen. Nina Turner (D-Cleveland) on a similar Cleveland schools reform. "We've seen two examples now of where we can work together and I just applaud all four of you." Rep. Heard said she hopes this second locally specific bill will force a long-term conversation on reform. "We have wonderful school districts that are performing very well throughout the entire state, but we have far too many that are facing really severe challenges," she said. Sen. Turner (D-Cleveland) said she wanted to echo what Sen. Hite said about the bill. Alex Fisher, president and CEO of the Columbus Partnership and member of the Columbus Education Commission that developed the bill proposals, said the measure does have a statewide impact as the future of the city has statewide economic consequences and as Ohio's largest district, CCS has "enormous" education consequences. Sen. Lehner said the "naysayers" are arguing that the creation of district-specific plans is actually the work of some entity in an attempt to take over education in the state. She asked if there were outside sources involved in the Columbus Plan. Mr. Fisher said the work among the business community, district and mayor was with the "purest of motivations." "While I've heard even in our own community in the early days all the various theories about why we might want to be involved, I cannot think of a single opportunity which we have to gain anything from this plan other than building a better life and opportunity for the kids in our community," he said. "The same people that were skeptical of us in the beginning, we were skeptical of. We had the same misperceptions about what the motivations of the teachers union might be. We had the same misperceptions about what the motivations of the school board might be and what the motivations of the mayor (were)." Sen. Turner said the business community's commitment to traditional public schools rebuts arguments that there might be an outside push for charter support. Mr. Fisher confirmed the commission's devotion to traditional schools. The bill would place an issue on the November ballot to create an independent auditor for the district, place a levy on the ballot for a new levy to be shared with partnering charters, and allow the Columbus mayor to sponsor charters. Rep. Grossman also noted the House made two changes to the bill to allow the independent auditor to audit the use of levy dollars in charters and to require an annual report of the independent auditor to be submitted to the General Assembly. Sen. Lehner asked about the sponsors' comments that 35% of Columbus charter students being in A or B schools while only 25% of district students are in schools with those ratings. She asked if the plan does anything to address D or F charter schools. Rep. Heard said the process involves "squeezing out" the bad schools. Partnering charters will either be invited by the mayor or required to apply and be graded. "Parents will just start making better and better choices because they will be better informed and the other schools will simply go away" via declining enrollment, she said. Sen. Lehner asked what the district plans to do about C schools. Rep. Grossman said part of that would be achieved through the redevelopment of how the district schools operate. There will be a lot more ownership by the school. For mediocre charter schools, she said she expects they will see declining enrollment. Carol Perkins, president of the CCS Board of Education, offered support for the bill but again pushed for changes that were not adopted on her recommendation

by the House. She said the bill lists tasks the independent auditor is required to do as well as those he or she has the discretion to do. Among those permissive functions is ensuring the accuracy and reporting of student performance and enrollment data. "Given what the district is currently experiencing with investigations into student attendance data, I do not believe this audit function should remain discretionary," she said. Ms. Perkins told Sen. Lehner there was no discussion with the commission about the proposed change but did speak with the mayor on the matter. She said she is unaware of any difference of opinion on the amendment. Emmanuel Remy, president of the Northland Community Council, said Northland has the highest concentration of charters in the Columbus district. Many on Northland's education committee, like himself, had no idea what the mission of charters was. "Through this committee we now understand their purpose, are excited about the growth of the respectable ones and appreciate their willingness to talk with other public and private schools to share ideas and concerns," he said. He said the Columbus Education Commission identified needs for providing early education preparedness for preschool-age children, hiring and attracting highly skilled teachers and providing technology in schools – things some city charters are already doing. Andrew Boy, founder and executive director of the United Schools Network, testified about the success his charter school – the Columbus Collegiate Academy – has seen and the need for greater funding support. Greater Cleveland Partnership Vice President of State and Local Government Affairs Marty McGann also lent support, saying the Columbus Plan is not the Cleveland Plan, nor should it be. "With the Cleveland Plan, we addressed the specific challenges of our community," he said. "The provisions of House Bill 167 speak directly to the particular needs of Columbus schools."

Gongwer News Service. 6/5/13

Kasich: Ohio colleges must improve job training

Neither Ohio companies nor Ohio universities are doing their part to match job training and available jobs, Gov. John Kasich said Wednesday. Kasich told the Ohio Board of Regents that the state had asked 130 companies for details on the jobs they need to fill, using a tool developed with the consulting giant Accenture. "The problem is that the big companies, or most of them, don't want to tell us what they need," Kasich told the board that oversees Ohio's public colleges and universities. "They will say they can't find the workers, and then if you ask them what they need, they won't tell you." Universities are just as much at fault for a training system that is fractured and inefficient, he said. "I want universities to align their efforts to make sure that when the students come in, they're trained for the jobs that exist," the governor said. "The universities all know they need to do a better job of this." Kasich said the state's biggest insurance companies have joined together with universities to fund risk management programs. One of the biggest is at the University of Cincinnati, which started a center last year heavily funded by the Lindner family and Great American Insurance Group. Next on Kasich's list is the energy industry. He said high-paying utility jobs are plentiful for students with two-year degrees. After a day full of bureaucratic talk of online courses, articulation and transfer agreements and computing capacity, Kasich provided a heavy dose of reality. "Wouldn't it be great if you could just hand them (students) a menu?" he said. "It would be fantastic when they walk in the door if they're able to see the range of opportunities available to them. "If you're good at math – anyone here good at math? – math can lead to risk management," he said. Kasich said counselors and advisers need a bigger role. And he lauded the century-old co-op program at UC. But he said there probably won't be more state funding for co-op, which the Board of Regents is trying to

expand across the state. “The University of Cincinnati did this without any state money,” Kasich said. “I don’t know why the taxpayers need to subsidize that, because the internships should be part of the educational process.” And the governor made clear that universities need to spend their money differently. “I have friends who are on boards of universities who tell me there is so much more that can be wrung out of current operations and applied to something better, you’d be stunned. And I believe that.”

Cincinnati Enquirer. 6/5/13

LULAC responds to the Strengthening America’s Schools Act of 2013

Yesterday, Margaret Moran, National President of the League of the United Latin American Citizens released the following statement regarding the introduction of *Strengthening America’s Schools Act of 2013* by Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). The bill will reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* commonly known as the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. “LULAC appreciates Senator Harkin for introducing legislation that is paramount in addressing the many education challenges that underserved student populations face. We join other civil rights organizations in expressing the need to move beyond the current ESEA waivers system. Of particular importance to LULAC is ensuring that strong accountability provisions are included in the bill which will ensure that Latino students receive proper attention and instruction in our schools. We look forward to working with Senator Harkin as the process continues and urge our membership to keep a watchful eye on the legislation as it moves through the Senate. “According to some estimates, Latino students today make up 11 million of the country’s public education system and compose over 20% of the students enrolled in pre-K through twelfth grade. Today, Latino students are achieving at higher rates but continue to face challenges that can only be addressed by working collaboratively with education advocates and political leaders.” The ESEA was previously introduced in 2010. LULAC, the Hispanic Education Coalition, co-chaired by LULAC, and the Campaign for High School Equity, submitted recommendations to the Senate HELP Committee regarding the reauthorization of ESEA. Unfortunately, that bill failed to move out of the Senate.

LULAC. 6/5/13

Gee on way out as Ohio State president following publication of critical statements

Days after news reports of derogatory statements that he himself described as a "misguided attempt at humor," Ohio State President Gordon Gee has announced his retirement effective July 1. Mr. Gee announced his plans in a joint release with Robert H. Schottenstein, chairman of the OSU Board of Trustees. Executive Vice President and Provost Joseph A. Alutto will be named interim president. Details on a search for a permanent replacement are pending. "I recently returned from a vacation with my family, during which time I had a chance to consider the university's phenomenal achievements and the road that lies ahead for it. Ohio State now has a richness of new opportunities that would be the envy of most universities," Mr. Gee said. "During my days away, I also spent some time in self-reflection. And after much deliberation, I have decided it is now time for me to turn over the reins of leadership to allow the seeds that we

have planted to grow. It is also time for me to reenergize and refocus myself." President Gee served as OSU president for two terms, from 1990-1997 and 2007 to present. His latest stint came to an abrupt end following the outcry over reports that he had disparaged Catholics, the Southeastern Conference and other universities during a meeting of the Athletic Council in December. The incident cast a shadow over his achievements at the university and in the higher education community, including his recent efforts to help raise more than \$1.6 billion and his lead role in developing a new higher education funding model at the behest of Gov. John Kasich. "I began my career at Ohio State in 1990, and I was honored to return as its leader six years ago. I am proud to have played a critical role in the university's transformation from excellence to eminence. I plan to work closely with the trustees and Dr. Alutto to ensure the smoothest transition possible," he said. Chairman Schottenstein said he was informed of the president's decision Tuesday morning. "By any measure, Gordon has been a transformational leader for Ohio State. His service to Ohio State has been superb. This man has been an inspiration to many people, including me, and we all are forever grateful for his friendship," he said. "His thoughtful and unique leadership style has taken the university to new levels. His engagement with the entire Ohio State community is truly remarkable. Clearly he leaves a rich and lasting legacy and will be missed. On behalf of the board, I would like to express our profound gratitude to President Gee for his service to the Ohio State University. As we go forward, the university board will work in close partnership with Dr. Gee and Dr. Alutto through this period to continue the tremendous success and growth we have seen under his leadership."

Gongwer News Service. 6/4/13

Kasich signs executive order 2013-05K

Today Governor John R. Kasich signed Executive Order 2013-05K, directing state departments, boards and commissions to streamline the state licensing process to take into account relevant military education and to direct the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, in collaboration with presidents of the University System of Ohio, to simplify the process for awarding college credit for military education for veterans and service members. Executive Order 2013-05K can be viewed [here](#).

Office of Governor John R. Kasich. 6/11/13

With no ride to school, African-American and poor children disproportionately hit in traffic in urban districts

More than five years ago, Brittany Daniel's half-hour walk home from school ended abruptly when a Ford F-250 turned left on Glenwood Avenue — striking the 12-year-old as she approached her home on Patterson Avenue in North Akron. "I was on bed rest for about three weeks. After that, I was on crutches for the next three months," said Daniel, now 17 and home-schooled after leaving Akron Public Schools. "My grades definitely dropped when [the accident] happened because I missed a lot of school." Daniel suffered a concussion and three pelvic bone fractures. After Daniel regained her ability to walk, three months of psychiatric counseling ensued. "I was really terrified to cross the street," she said. A counselor held her hand as she slowly overcame her fear. "It was like a post-traumatic stress disorder." Daniel suffered more

than most, but her story is common among urban students. In Ohio, African-American children and those from lower-income families are far more likely to be hit by cars than white children in the suburbs, according to a Beacon Journal analysis, and the reason is simple: The state has created inequality in transportation to school. At least 1,256 minors between the ages of 5 and 17 years old have been struck by a vehicle in Ohio's eight most populous counties since 2008. Unlike students who attend suburban school districts, where parents or buses are more likely to provide safe transit to school, Daniel and many of those 1,256 students had no alternative but to walk busy streets. The state offers no funding assistance for children who walk less than two miles — a trek that could take 40 minutes for a young child at a healthy pace and with no stopping for traffic. In Ohio's largest urban school districts — Akron, Canton, Columbus, Toledo, Cincinnati, Dayton, Cleveland and Youngstown — students were 3.3 times more likely to be hit by a vehicle than in surrounding suburban districts. A stunning one in 446 city students has been hit by a vehicle in the past five years, according to a Beacon Journal analysis that examined enrollment figures and crash reports from the Ohio Department of Transportation. In suburban districts, the figure was one in 1,473 students struck by a vehicle over the same time. Akron ranks in the middle of the eight urban centers with one student struck by a vehicle for every 468 who live in the city. Statistically, that means that within 12 days of the start of the school year, an Akron-area student is hit and injured in a car-pedestrian accident. "One is too high," Sen. Frank LaRose, R-Copley Township, said of such accidents. He championed a Senate committee on school safety as educators and parents reacted to a deadly school shooting in Connecticut in December. The committee convened for two days of testimony in early March and dealt mostly with the hypothetical occurrence of a shooter entering an Ohio school. The discussion and testimony missed a more real danger, LaRose said. "There are a lot more things that impact school safety than these big splashy incidents that get national attention," LaRose said of school shootings. "The walk to school is statistically more dangerous." During the school year, thousands of students flood city streets before 8 a.m. and again after 2 p.m. Most of them, like Elizabeth Smith, live too close to a school in a district so burdened with challenges that buses are not a financial option, and the families often don't have cars. Smith's mother, Patty Wright, recalls a doctor at Akron Children's Hospital inserting his entire finger into the hole in her daughter's leg after a plow truck dragged her along East Tallmadge Avenue in front of North High School. The incident occurred in 2010, years after Wright let her daughter make the walk to school alone for the first time as a fifth-grader. The kids she sees from her front door on a usual school day are even younger. "I see probably second- and third-graders walking," Wright said. "Oh, my God, between Jennings [middle school] and North, I would say probably a good 400 or 500 kids." Smith said she can't predict when her right leg might give out. "My muscle will be messed up for the rest of my life," she said, recalling the incident of the plow impaling her right thigh as she crossed an intersection on Tallmadge Avenue. "I was like right across the street from the high school," Smith said. Eight minors, including Smith, were hit in Akron while walking to or from school in February 2010. A day before Smith was hit, crossing guard Megan Williams, 10, was the first line of defense for scores of children at Forest Hill Elementary in North Akron. At the appropriate time, she shoved a "stop pole" into an intersection, but it did no good this time. Xavier Fassnacht, an 11-year-old leaving school at 2:36 p.m., was the first in a pack of kids to enter the crosswalk in front of Williams as a Chevy Tahoe turned the corner. "I just froze there. I was thinking, 'What am I supposed to do? I just witnessed a kid get hit by a car and I have no idea what to do,'" said Williams, now an eighth-grader who walks 45 minutes each day to and from Jennings. A mapping of the car-pedestrian crash scenes shows concentrations

along Tallmadge Avenue between North and Jennings schools and also along Copley Road near Buchtel High School. The others are spread across the Akron city map, and the only common factor was that every child who was hit was within two miles of a school. About 10 percent of Ohio school districts, including Akron, have cut transportation on yellow buses — the safest form of transportation in the country — to the state minimum. The state legislature and governors have been instrumental in placing more kids on the streets. An annual \$50 million bus purchase program was suspended in 2010 by former Gov. Ted Strickland after the economic collapse of 2008. The program helped school districts maintain their fleets. Three years later, neither Gov. John Kasich nor the legislature has moved to reinstate the program, even as revenues this year are running \$1 billion ahead of a year ago and Ohio Department of Education data show the fleet to be at a breaking point for costly repairs. More importantly, an annual state subsidy of about \$450 million for school transportation has failed to keep pace with the costs for school districts. The subsidy has increased a little more than 5 percent since 2004, while fuel costs have soared 140 percent, according to a Beacon Journal analysis. Although the House and Senate have added money to the transportation line item as the new two-year budget passes through the legislature, they have included language that directs more of that money to private and charter schools. There is no evidence the money will benefit public school kids in general, let alone those in urban districts getting hit by cars. “It’s a concern. What we’re talking about here is we’ve not had an increase in transportation funding. And I’d like to see us take some action in the future,” LaRose said. Buses are the safest mode for transporting children to school, about 11 times safer than walking or riding a bike, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. Summit County districts that bused fewer than a quarter of their students — Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls — accounted for 90 percent of the 69 minors hit by vehicles over the past three years. Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls also have high poverty rates. Analysts and educators note that minority and black students living and walking in poor districts are disproportionately at risk. Mogadore offers busing, yet transportation reports from the Ohio Department of Education suggest that — like urban Akron, Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton — students in the village tend not to ride the bus. But the reason they ride isn’t because they walk. It’s because “most of our children are driven by their parents,” Mogadore Superintendent Christina Dinklocker said. With roughly 275 students at the high school, she counts about 20 who walk to and from the building. That’s not the case in Akron and other urban centers, especially in the winter months, when snow blankets sidewalks before the sun rises in the morning. That’s when parents like Loretta Williams send their children off to brave the intersections, busy crosswalks and congested streets. Her daughter, Megan, joins thousands of students who set out for Jennings, Seiberling, North, Buchtel and a network of public and private schools across Akron. “We’re considered within the reasonable walking distance,” Loretta Williams said with a sarcastic chuckle. It’s a walk that often reminds Megan of that snowy day near Seiberling Elementary when a fellow student was taken off his feet by a “fast, red car.” Even Brittany Daniel, who was hit by the pickup truck and has regained the will to cross the street, remembers that day 5 years ago at the corner of Patterson and Glenwood avenues. “I was coming home from school. It was about 3:30,” Daniel said, remembering the accident and wondering if she would have taken the bus if it stopped in front of her house. “I would definitely go on the bus,” she figures.

AG Safety Task Force recommends state funding for school upgrades, personnel

[Attorney General Mike DeWine](#) on Friday unveiled a variety of best practices to ramp up safety in school buildings including legislative recommendations to provide more funding for certain measures. Formed last December in response to the Sandy Hook and Chardon school shootings, the AG's School Safety Task Force combined the expertise of first responders, school staff and mental health experts to outline how schools and communities can better work together to ensure the safety of students. "What we know if we know anything is that in regard to school safety, it has to be a holistic approach and you have to involve many, many, many groups," Mr. DeWine said at a Statehouse news conference. Although the vast majority of [the report's](#) recommendations can be done without legislative action, the group did provide advice for the General Assembly. Among the legislative recommendations is to provide funding for school resource officers, counselor's and providers for access to mental health services, and building construction and upgrades. It also suggests modifying student-to-counselor ratio requirements. The biennial budget ([HB 59](#)) contains \$12 million through the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission budget to provide grants for the purchase an installation of one MARCS unit per building and an entrance security system. The funding would reimburse up to \$2,000 for the MARCS unit and up to \$5,000 for the entrance security. The budget also incorporates a separate bill ([SB 42](#)) to allow districts to levy a property tax exclusively for safety and security purposes. [Sen. Joe Schiavoni](#) (D-Youngstown) tried to amend the budget bill Thursday with \$68 million more for school security costs but the GOP majority tabled he proposal. The task force additionally recommends making changes to law to allow the sharing of health and mental health services and resources among the Departments of Health, Education, Mental Health and Job and Family Services. Task force members also advocate for requiring schools to perform more than one live safety drill per school year. Current law allows the use of one of 10 fire drills required in law for a safety drill. The report also references recently enacted legislation ([SB 7](#)) that includes a provision requiring courts to report for entry into the National Crime Information Center if a person is found not guilty by reason of insanity, incompetent to stand trial or is convicted of a violent offense where a mental health evaluation is part of the sentencing. The task force recommends the legislature review privacy and mental health laws and make any changes to allow the sharing of information among safety partners, including medical and/or criminal or civil commitment records. The report also suggests granting immunity protections to schools, their employees and other first responder and medical partners related to liability for good faith efforts in sharing information for safety purposes. The AG has no authority to make recommendations mandatory, but among other legislative suggestions are to:

- Require schools and law enforcement to report data collected on threat assessments and the handling of emergencies to a central state repository.
- Work with Congress to modify HIPAA to get data to the firearm registry regarding mentally ill individuals.
- Review regulations that may have unintended consequences related to school violence when children are removed from the school environment. In that review certain

regulations, such as those related to weapons in school and other types of serious breaches of conduct, may impact school funding and involve legal ramifications.

- Consolidate school and campus safety and security into one single state office, preschool through college.

Following the Chardon shooting in February 2012, AG DeWine discovered that more than half of the school buildings in the state were not in compliance with a law that required them to have a school safety plan on file with his office. The law requires it be updated every three years. "Today, all schools in the state have now submitted something to the Ohio attorney general's office, so we've come a long, long way," Mr. DeWine said, adding work remains as 189 schools have not updated plans in the last three years and 58 schools are missing floor plans or emergency plans. "The real challenge is not in those numbers. The real challenge is, I think, in having school plans that are quality plans with some consistency - mindful of the local needs - but with some consistency from plan to plan, and the plans also have to be useful." Mr. DeWine said he does not think it's anyone's fault that the plans are so varied in quality because no one ever put forth best practices before now. In addition to the report of recommendations, the task force also issued a model school safety plan that walks schools through how to put a plan together. "We fully understand that each community has to make its own decisions about how to implement (the best practices)," Mr. DeWine said. The report includes a sample school floor plan diagram that the AG said should be what all school submissions should look like in the future. The plans are housed in the state's OHLEG system that is only accessible by first responders. The AG's office is also working with ODE to allow for schools to upload their plans directly online through district's existing SAFE accounts and then be transferred to OHLEG. The SAFE portal was launched in 2003 and is a "single sign on" software. ODE will not review or store the plans, according to the agency. The approach should be available with the next two to four weeks. He said there has been a lack of communication among the schools, emergency responders and mental health officials. The task force suggests the legislature take action to require local safety partners sign the safety plans to show they have been consulted on their development. The AG's office has conducted training classes with thousands of teachers so far. The program covers how to identify students with a problem and what to do if an active shooter is in the building. Training materials are available through his office. Mr. DeWine said he does not expect to continue meetings of the School Safety Task Force. "They've given their time," he said. "I think what we need to do now is to get this out, disseminate it, and if we have problems in the future, I'm sure these folks would be willing to come back in and do it again."

Gongwer News Service. 6/7/13

Ohio colleges get mostly low grades from National Council on Teacher Quality

A controversial [national report](#) released Tuesday says that colleges and universities across the country are doing a terrible job of preparing their students to be teachers. That was true [in Ohio](#) as well, where almost all the programs that were rated got fewer than three stars on the four-star scale used by the National Council on Teacher Quality. Two graduate programs at Cleveland State University and one at Kent State University got zero stars, earning them a warning symbol

from the council's "Teacher Prep Review." Ohio State University, however, was at the top of the charts for its graduate programs for elementary and high school teachers. [Critics of the review](#) say that it comes from an advocacy group biased against traditional schools of education and its design provides a poor measure of how well they're doing. Many private colleges – including all but a handful in Ohio – declined to provide the requested information because of their concerns. But Kate Walsh, head of the Washington, D.C.-based council, said her group is hardly alone in finding the current way of educating teachers to be fundamentally flawed. "Our strategy here is to create a consumer tool," she said. "The only way to really drive change is to use an informed consumer." The report looked at 1,130 schools across the country but got enough information to calculate ratings for only 608 of them. Walsh said the study used measurable standards to gauge how students are selected for teacher programs, how well they're prepared for teaching various subjects and how much practice they get before their first day on the job. "The results were dismal," she said. The academic requirements for entering a school of education are often lower than what's needed to play on college athletic teams, she added. Prospective teachers don't get the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. And their student teaching experience is usually valuable only if they "lucked out and happened to get a great mentor." Cheryl Achterberg, dean of Ohio State's education college, was pleased with its high ratings -- 3½ stars for the graduate program for elementary teachers and a rare four stars for the graduate program for high school teachers. But she wasn't exactly sure how the calculations were done. "We submitted a lot of paperwork," she said. "They extracted whatever they extracted using methods we really don't know yet." Achterberg added that the faculty has been hard at work for the past three years to completely rewrite the curriculum and coordinate across classes so that every course "relates to producing a great teacher." Kent State's programs got one or two stars but none for the graduate program for high school teachers. That program has gotten positive feedback from the students and the teachers who supervise their student teaching, said Daniel Mahony, the education dean. "We have issues with a lot of the standards they used because they're so rigidly applied," he said. For example, the council may have required 30 hours of certain courses, but a school would get no credit for requiring 29 hours. Mahony said a [report on teacher preparation](#) from the Ohio Board of Regents, released in January, provides prospective teachers and employers with a much better gauge because it focuses on outcomes instead of policies. "I've been here five years and I'm comfortable in saying those who go through our program are happy with it and do very well," he said. "For me, the proof of the quality of our program is in the graduates." Jenny Cappuzzello is one of them. The Salem native graduated last year and just finished her first year of teaching fourth grade in the Mount Healthy district near Cincinnati. "The people I work with told me I don't act like a first-year teacher, and others I know who went to Kent have heard the same thing," she said. Cleveland State got one and two stars for its undergraduate programs but none for its two graduate programs. One of them, which prepares teachers for urban high schools, has [won national awards](#), said Brian Yusko, an associate dean in the education college. "We hold that program in high esteem," he said. "It's shocking that it would come out with significant weaknesses." Yusko said he's still trying to figure out the reasons behind the low ratings, but he thinks at least part of the problem was the way questions were posed in the survey of schools. "We responded the best we could," he said. "But the questions were not getting to the full picture of what we do in our programs, and there was no opportunity to add to that."

Federal student loan interest rate to double July 1

The average Ohio college student graduates with \$28,683 in student loan debt. And unless Congress acts before the end of the month, their debts will grow a lot higher. In a partisan debate involving President Barack Obama and lawmakers on Capitol Hill, Congress is struggling to forge a compromise in time to prevent an interest rate increase for new subsidized Stafford student loans taken out after July 1, which are scheduled to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. If those rates double, then 361,857 students at Ohio colleges would be affected, according to a study done by The Institute for College Access and Success, a non-profit education organization in California. More than 40,000 local students have federal student loans for the 2011-12 school year, including nearly 10,000 at Wright State University, 9,000 at Miami University and more than 7,000 at Sinclair Community College. Diane Stemper, executive director of Ohio State University's financial aid office, said that 59 percent of university students graduated with an average debt of \$21,566 for the 2012 academic year. She warned that if interest rates double, a student facing a debt of \$25,470 under the current loan rates would discover they actually owe \$29,782. "We have an obligation to not make interest rates so high that students can't pay them back," said Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Columbus, and a former senior vice president at Ohio State. "We should figure out a compromise that would help young folks continue to matriculate, for them to be able to say, 'I can work hard and have a job that will allow me to pay back the loans I took out.'" "Just last April, total student loan debt nationwide surpassed \$1 trillion. Democrats in the Senate and House back a bill that would freeze the interest rates at 3.4 percent for another two years, which they say would allow Congress more time to generate a long-term solution to the nation's accumulating student debt. By contrast, House Republicans approved a bill last month that would make interest rates for subsidized Stafford loans equal to the yield of the 10-year Treasury note plus 2.5 percentage points. The rates would be fluid, meaning they would change as the market evolves, and would be capped at 8.5 percent. Although some analysts believe the differences are not that great, so far, neither side appears ready to budge. In a speech last month, Obama vowed to veto the House Republican bill, charging that it "fails to lock in low rates for students next year" and "eliminates safeguards for lower-income families." In a statement accompanying Obama's speech, the White House warned the House GOP plan "creates greater uncertainty for borrowers about the total cost of their loans." Last Thursday at his weekly news conference House Speaker John Boehner, R-West Chester Twp., fired back, claiming Obama's refusal to compromise demonstrates that the president is "more interested in scoring political points" than resolving the issue, adding that he fears Obama "and his party have decided to deliberately allow rates to rise on students and families." Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, told reporters in a conference call that "many of us believe that over the long haul it's better to tie it to the market because right now the rates go up and down based on congressional action ... and there's a lot of uncertainty with that." Those involved in the student loan program disagree on which approach is better. While Stemper said Ohio State has not endorsed any plan, she said that the university "supports tying the interest rates to the market rate." But she said OSU "believes that all of the proposals need to be evaluated to determine the best approach to keeping the program both viable and affordable for students." Tabitha Woodruff of the Ohio Public Interest Research Group countered that the Republican proposals would offer a short-term fix for students entering college within the next few years, but after that rates would be jacked way up. In addition, the Democratic and Republican bills take very different approaches on how to pay for the bill. The Democrats

finance their version by closing what they say are tax loopholes, including saving \$4.6 billion over 10 years through a major change in Individual Retirement Accounts and 401Ks. The Democrats want IRA distributions to a beneficiary to be completed within five years of the account holder's death. Under current law, the distributions can take place over a longer period of time. By contrast, the House Republican bill would reduce the federal deficit by \$3.7 billion during the next decade because students would face the possibility of paying higher interest rates. "The current high school freshman would be paying for the seniors in high school and paying to reduce the deficit," Woodruff said. "Student loans should be looked at as a job creator and an economic investment."

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