BREAKING NEWS: OCSS ADVOCACY VICTORY

Ohio Exams for 2019-20 Eliminated

Today, the Ohio House joined the Ohio Senate in voting to cancel state tests for the 2019-20 academic year. Governor DeWine has confirmed his intention to sign these changes into law. The Ohio Council for the Social Studies advocacy led on this issue, as evident in the organization's official Board position statement on the issue. OCSS Legislative Liaison, Lucas George, and leadership were very active in contacting lawmakers to garner support for the immediate cancellation of these exams to provide one less burden during these difficult times for Ohio's students, families, and educators.

Per the Dayton Daily News, amendments in House Bill 197 which both houses of the legislature overwhelmingly approved include:

- **Testing/report cards**: Annual state testing for the 2019-20 school year are waived by the bill, as are the September state report cards that are largely based on that testing. Schools that were subject to any sanctions in 2019-20, based on poor previous report cards, will retain those sanctions for 2020-21. Examples include certain levels of state monitoring, eligibility for private-school vouchers or charter school start-ups.

- **Graduation rules**: The bill allows public and private schools to grant a diploma to any student who, at the time school closures began March 17 was on track to graduate this spring — even if
began March 17, was on track to graduate this spring — even if that student is unable to complete some of the requirements now. According to the bill, that would be the case if, “the principal, in consultation with teachers and counselors, determines that the student has successfully completed the student’s high school curriculum or individualized education program.

- **Private-school vouchers:** After months of public and political fights over major changes to the EdChoice program, the legislature decided to make none of those changes for now, keeping the program the same as it was for 2019-20.

- **Online education:** Current Ohio law limits traditional schools to no more than three online or “distance learning” makeup days per year. This bill formally allows schools to use distance learning to make up any number of days missed due to coronavirus closures. This appears to open the door for K-12 schools to take the step that many colleges already have, cancelling in-person classes for the rest of the semester.

- **Third-grade promotion:** Ohio currently has a law requiring most students to beat a minimum score on the state’s third-grade reading test in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Since the spring third-grade reading test will not be administered this year, Wednesday’s bill allows schools to promote all third-grade students. But it also allows a school to hold a student back if the principal and the student’s reading teacher agree that the student is not reading at grade level.

- **Special education:** Federal law has specific procedures for serving students with disabilities, under the terms of individualized education plans (IEPs). Wednesday’s bill allows licensed special education teachers, counselors, therapists and other professionals “to provide services electronically or via telephone.

- **Educator evaluations:** The bill permits a board of education to elect not to conduct evaluations of district employees for 2019-20 if the board determines that it would be impracticable to do so. It removes any penalties that would come from skipping evaluations, and it also prohibits the use of value-added student growth data from any teacher evaluations that are done.

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**Free OCSS Webinar Tomorrow for Contact Hours**

**Language Matters:**  
**Teaching Social Studies**  
**Thursday, March 26th, 2020**  
from 3:00-3:50pm
No matter what social studies subject you teach, you are teaching about people. How do you refer to groups of people who have a history of being marginalized? Are you putting "people first" when referring to persons with disabilities? What terms do you use when teaching slavery in the United States? Enslaved person or slave? Indigenous Persons/Native Americans? Occupation terms that are gender-neutral or gender-specific? What about topics for students that identify as a part of the LGBTQ+ communities? How do we discuss categories and identities respectfully? Join us for a fluid discussion on how language matters.

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studies professionals in Ohio. We advocate for the vital role of social studies and assist educators through professional development for the delivery of effective and innovative instruction. Our conferences and publications provide a network of services to members throughout the state.

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Educating Ohio's Citizens for Tomorrow's World  

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