



# ACHIEVEMENT EVERYWHERE

COMMON SENSE FOR OHIO'S CLASSROOMS

Dear Ohio Educator:

Earlier today I joined my boss, Gov. John Kasich, in describing to hundreds of our state's education leaders a new strategy for how Ohio can partner with local educators, parents and community leaders to improve student achievement. We call it *Achievement Everywhere* and it's a student-centered, classroom-centered approach that seeks to provide educators everywhere in Ohio with the resources they need to help their students succeed.

As a former teacher and superintendent who led Reynoldsburg City Schools for 27 years, and now as the Governor's chief education advisor, I have seen more than my fair share of education reform ideas. Some have been hugely successful and some have been as well-meaning as they were unproductive. What almost all of them lacked, however, was the right appreciation for how all the many pieces of Ohio's combined state-local education system interact.

To achieve meaningful improvement in Ohio, the diversity of districts, students, communities and local financial capacities all must be taken into account and then addressed with sensitivity, flexibility, strong resources and creativity. I believe we succeed in doing that with *Achievement Everywhere*, but read on and decide for yourself.

Let me first answer the big question on everyone's mind: will state funding be increased, stay flat, or cut? That answer is "increased". *Achievement Everywhere* invests \$1.2 billion more in local schools over the next two years than current levels—and no school district's funds are reduced.

Funds matter, as well as the ideas for how they are spent, which means it's essential that Ohio understands students' and teachers' needs and responds with the right ideas that tear down barriers and empower those on the front line—you. Highlights of these ideas include:

- Guaranteed funds to support a quality education at every school: To help compensate for disparities in local funding, Ohio will ensure that every district levying at least 20 mills receives the same level of resources as if it enjoyed \$250,000 in total property tax per-pupil. This is significant funding, as only 4 percent of Ohio's schools enjoy greater per-pupil valuations. Extra funds are allocated in addition to this to districts with large amounts of low-income taxpayers.
- Investing directly in student success: Significant state funding in this budget will address the particular needs of students in the classroom, including targeted aid for disabled students, early-childhood programs, gifted students, children in poverty and English language learners.

- The Straight A Fund: *Achievement Everywhere* creates a new \$300 million *Straight A Fund* to provide one-time grants to districts with the will to take on ambitious new strategies for helping students improve achievement levels and increase their own operational efficiency. The goal is to be able to invest more money in students, not administration. In other words, if you have a good idea that can improve student success, work with your district to apply. If it's sustainable and promotes new efficiencies, you could get the funds you need to implement a new concept. Any savings generated through these transformations can be used by districts as they see fit, including to improve classroom instruction or make locally-generated property tax revenues go further.
- Creating a high-performance culture: As educators we have the commitment and drive to create high-achieving classrooms and schools, but sometimes state rules and regulations have held us back—and we may not even know it. Giving school districts the freedom to sweep away certain state mandates—as long as they don't impact health or safety—gives educators the flexibility to make their own decisions on how they can best help their students continually achieve better results.

Though I'm an educator who works in policy and no longer in the classroom, I am and always will be at heart a teacher. It's not my job, but my calling; and as an educator—who's also married to an educator—I believe deeply in the important mission of helping children become all that they can. With unlimited resources, time, cooperation and patience, just think of what we could accomplish for our boys and girls, but that's not our world. So let's instead come together with our best ideas, our energy, our commitment and the confident knowledge that parents and our communities want what we want—to see our kids equipped with the skills to make good choices and thrive throughout their lives.

Governor Kasich's *Achievement Everywhere* plan provides the resources to enable this kind of collaboration to succeed. I am proud to have helped him craft this plan and believe you will find as much to like about as I do. I encourage you to visit <http://achievementeverywhere.ohio.gov> to learn more about it and submit questions or ideas. As *Achievement Everywhere* moves through the Legislature over the next several months I want to hear any and all ideas for how to make it better.

On behalf of Governor Kasich, the people of the state of Ohio, and every life you have ever made better, thank you for your personal and professional commitment to the education of our state's next generation.

Sincerely,



Richard A Ross

Governor's Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education