Ohio Department of Education
Performance Audit Summary

AUDIT SCOPE AREAS

- Student Success
- Ohio Student Assessments
- EMIS and Data Management
- State Foundation Payment Process
- Information Technology

STUDENT SUCCESS

We examined high performing districts using data from Ohio's District Profile Report (popularly known as the Cupp Report) to ascertain the impact of expenditures on student achievement with a focus on high performing districts.

Conclusion: Expenditure per pupil has a loose association with Achievement in Ohio, particularly at the high performing districts.

As total district spending increases, there is no single expenditure category driving this increase. Expenditure categories typically increase across the board.

Among high performing districts, ability to generate local revenue was the factor most correlated with expenditure.

There is a wide range of expenditure per pupil even among the subset of high performing districts.

Recommendation 1.1: Additional opportunities to drive efficiency and achievement could be realized by ODE by examining the relationship between district spending and student performance. ODE should monitor districts the Department deems to be high performing or high improving, particularly those that achieve results at lower-than-average expenditure levels in order to determine how other districts might achieve more cost-effective outcomes. This information can be used to assist other districts in areas of strategic spending; program utilization; and resource allocation.

Recommendation 1.2: To measure the outcomes of ODE's improvement initiatives, the Department should collect sufficient business intelligence to make quantitative determinations of program success and failure.

OHIO STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

Conclusion: Tests related to achievement, promulgated by the Department, are in line with federal requirements but districts indicate that too much time is dedicated to testing.

Recommendation 2.1: ODE should more clearly convey the purpose and importance of specific standardized tests to stakeholders in an effort to improve shared understanding of testing goals. Though natural tension exists because tests are used to ensure accountability, ODE could potentially enhance district buy in on the benefits of test data.

Testing Time vs Classroom Time

Grade	Total Hours of Test Time per grade	Total Minimum Instructional Hours Required Per Year	Percentage of Classroom Time Being Spent Taking Standardized Tests
Grade 3	8.5	910	0.93%
Grade 4	5.5	910	0.60%
Grade 5	8.0	910	0.88%
Grade 6	6.5	910	0.71%
Grade 7	6.5	1001	0.65%
Grade 8	9.0	1001	0.90%
Grades 9-12	28.0	4004	0.70%

Source: ODE

Note: Because high school assessments can be taken in various years, we combined the required assessments for all grade levels.

Recommendation 2.2: Students have the opportunity to take practice tests, but ODE does not monitor guest login performance on practice tests. Identifying and collecting available data from the practice test website would help inform the Department about the time used to take practice tests, district and student use of the site, and opportunities for continuous improvement related to the resources available to students and educators

EMIS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

We noted a markedly more efficient and effective EMIS system in 2020, compared to 2002.

Recommendation 3.1: ODE should make strategic improvements to its internal processes involving EMIS to enhance user experience and ensure user needs are met. This might include revisions of the EMIS Manual and training offerings, increased stakeholder communications, creating customizable reporting, and consistently reviewing feedback from its internal program offices and local districts.

Conclusion: ODE should continue working to revise and update EMIS, and the associated EMIS Manual, for use by its stakeholders.

STATE FOUNDATION PAYMENT PROCESS

Recommendation 4.1: ODE should implement strategic changes to internal processes in order to finalize school foundation funding prior to November 30th. These changes may include setting an earlier window for funding appeals, an earlier deadline for providers to invoice for specific scholarships, an earlier deadline for Community School FTE reviews, and a reevaluation of ODE personnel staffing commitments during report card processing.

Conclusion: ODE has reduced the amount of time between the end of the fiscal year and the final reconciliation. However, the current process results in a reconciliation period of nearly six months after the end of the fiscal year. By finalizing payments prior to November 30th, ODE would allow for a more streamlined budget process and reduce the amount of time encumbrances are open beyond the fiscal year end.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

ODE's Information Technology Office (ITO) is staffed consistent with industry standards. It dedicates a higher percentage of employees to application development and support compared to other agencies, however this is based on an internal management decision to complete application development work internally rather than outsourcing.

Recommendation 5.1: ODE should develop a cloud migration strategy that establishes funding sources and prioritizes migration based on business use case justification. This strategy should be included in an IT strategic plan. Cloud computing provides advantages over other forms of processing in broader network access; better pooling of resources; and rapid scale relative to required demand.

Recommendation 5.2: ODE should develop an IT strategic plan aligned with the Department's strategic plan that contains project prioritization and encourages portfolio management. An IT strategic plan operates as a formal framework which ensures ITO investments and projects support ODE; and helps prioritize projects based on Departmental needs and goals, directing funds to the most critical investments and projects.

Noteworthy Accomplishment: ODE has used Agile Project Management for several years. The work is done in an iterative manner; entailing daily communication between the IT team and ODE staff responsible for project. The Agile Method requires less resource time, decreases risk by minimizing confusion, and leads to greater employee satisfaction.