

Analysis of Recent Student Test Results Shows Stark Disparities

COLUMBUS — An analysis of the latest test results highlights the recurring theme that large disparities exist between economically disadvantaged students in Ohio and their more economically stable peers.

The analysis was released today by three statewide education management organizations: the Ohio School Boards Association, Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Ohio Association of School Business Officials. Dr. Howard Fleeter, consultant for the Ohio Education Policy Institute (OEPI), prepared the analysis of the state's preliminary results from tests taken in spring 2015.

These included data from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in math and English language arts and the state's American Institutes for Research (AIR) science and social studies tests. See the charts and tables above for data from Fleeter's analysis.

After merging test data with information from the Ohio Department of Education on the distribution of economically disadvantaged students, Fleeter found the test performance in all four subject areas had a high negative correlation with the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

"This means that those districts performing the best on the tests have the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students, while districts with the lowest performance have the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students," Fleeter said.

The OEPI analysis focused on three different measures of proficiency for each of the four subject areas: students scoring at the "advanced" level, those scoring at the "limited" level and students ranking "proficient and above." After dividing all the state's districts into quintiles based on performance (from highest to lowest), Fleeter computed the average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in each quintile for each of the three performance categories. The results demonstrate Ohio continues to show a significant achievement gap between poor students and their wealthier counterparts.

For example, in districts performing in the highest quintile in math, 86.2% of students ranked proficient or above. Districts in that quintile had an average of 17.4% economically disadvantaged students.

Districts in the lowest performing quintile had only 44.3% of students scoring proficient or above in math, with 77% of their students considered economically disadvantaged. Similar results were found at all performance levels in all four subjects.

The analysis found that in school districts in the lowest performing quintile, only one subject area — English and language arts — had 50% or more of students scoring proficient or above. The economically disadvantaged percentage for that quintile was 75.7%. In the other subjects, fewer than 45% of the students were ranked proficient or above.

Fleeter's analysis also found that in the lowest performing quintile, fewer than 2% of the students scored advanced in three of the four subject areas. Students in science scored slightly better at 3.4%. An average of 75% economically disadvantaged students were in this quintile.

The statewide education management organizations said they are committed to helping lawmakers better understand the challenges faced by economically disadvantaged students. They plan to push for more focus on the educational needs of these students by urging lawmakers to look for additional ways to address these significant disparities.

While the state's school-funding formula does provide some resources to help students and districts meet the challenges they face, the performance results continue to be the same. That means much more work is needed to find solutions for these children.

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