

The Same Organizations That Lobby for Privatization of Public Schools via Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits and Charter Schools are Lobbying to Neuter the State Board of Education: Buckeye Institute is an Example.

The Buckeye Institute, in a December 8 [Columbus Dispatch](#) guest column, expressed the views of the privatizers regarding the legislative proposal to neuter the constitutionally-based State Board of Education. The privatizers' agenda is clear. They are working to transfer the public policy development process from the general public to a few public officials that are greatly influenced by privatization groups.

The restructuring of state level governance has nothing to do with improvement of educational opportunities for Ohio students. It has everything to do with concentration of control by removing input from citizens.

The column is provided below to show just how lacking it is in terms of a path to improvement of educational opportunities.

Your Turn

Greg R. Lawson

Guest columnist

Take power away from oversized, misguided Ohio Ed board

Ohio education reform, if it has any chance of success, must start at the top.

That means overhauling the ineffective State Board of Education that haplessly oversees the bureaucratic State Department of Education. Legislation pending in the General Assembly seems poised to take several commonsense steps in the right direction. And it's about time.

State, local, and business leaders have long lamented the failure of Ohio's public high schools to adequately prepare and equip graduates for the workforce.

Too many young men and women leave high school without the learning and skills they truly need to earn a living, afford a house, or support a family.

And they and the businesses that hire them suffer for it.

Meanwhile, Ohio's underperforming, underdelivering public education monopoly plods on, content with a status quo that jeopardizes the promise of a 21st century economy.

The pending legislative package proposes changes—starting with the board—that have been debated for decades and, at this point, are tardy and long overdue.

As Gov. George Voinovich observed more than 30 years ago, the State Board of Education has too many responsibilities. With too much on its administrative plate, the board loses focus, and the students pay the price. Currently comprised of 19 members, some appointed by the governor, others

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elected, the board's hybrid structure makes it difficult to even set an agenda much less respond quickly to a rapidly changing education landscape.

More than 16 months have lapsed, for example, since the last state superintendent announced retirement in September 2021 and the board still (still!) has not hired a permanent replacement.

The reform bill confronts this concern by reducing the board's responsibilities, redirecting its attention to teacher licensure and administrative issues, and empowering a revamped Department of Education and Workforce to concentrate on preparing students for life after high school.

Beyond its unwieldy size, composition, and purview, the board has also tended to become mired in various politically charged discussions rather than attend to the pressing matter at-hand: improving student education.

The Afterschool Child Enrichment Program, for example, created \$500 education savings accounts designed to deliver needed financial resources to parents. The program provides funds to help families pay for tutoring, curriculum enhancements, and extra classes to recover learning lost during COVID. The State Board of Education responsible to oversee the program and ensure that parents receive the funds – didn't.

The program should have reached more than 240,000 students across the state. So far, only 20,000 students have received their program benefit. A success rate of less than 10 percent is an 'F' in any gradebook.

The pending legislation reconfigures the Ohio Department of Education and makes the agency directly accountable to the governor.

The bill splits the agency into two divisions, one focused on traditional K-12 education, the other on preparing students for non-academic 'tech' careers.

Each division will have deputy directors on the Governor's Workforce Board to establish and sustain a critical, high-level connection between the state's education system and the businesses that will be employing its graduates.

With less responsibility, refocused attention, and more accountability, the retooled board should see its own scores improve. And that's an overdue improvement that Ohio and its students desperately needs.

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