

## **Legislative Update for OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED**

May 10, 2024

### **Gov. Mike DeWine**

A bill that would modify educator licensure laws is on its way to Gov. Mike DeWine for his signature. During a raucous session in which House lawmakers unsuccessfully attempted to offer a motion to vacate House Speaker Jason Stephens, the House on Wednesday unanimously concurred in the Senate amendments to House Bill (HB) 250, clearing the final legislative hurdle.

Among other provisions, the bill specifies that license holders who renew their license can have a license under the former three-grade-band system or the current two-grade band system, provided the new license includes at least one of the grades they were previously authorized to teach. The bill also ensures teachers who teach outside their current licensure grade band by up to two grade levels – a recent flexibility from HB 33 – are considered to be “properly certified or licensed” teachers.

DeWine has 10 days to sign the bill upon receiving it and is expected to sign the measure.

### **Senate activity**

The Senate Education Committee on Tuesday held proponent testimony on SB 219 featuring testimony from 23 proponents of the legislation. SB 219 would restore the current two grade bands back to the previous three grade bands. Press coverage of the hearing is accessible at the end of this newsletter, and a recording of the hearing is accessible here:

<https://www.ohiochannel.org/video/ohio-senate-education-committee-5-7-2024?start=465>.

A notice for the next meeting of the committee has not yet been posted.

### **House activity**

In an unprecedented move, House Speaker Jason Stephens on May 8 stripped six House Republicans of their committee chairmanships and removed them from the committees they chaired. Those removed were Reps. Adam Bird (Primary and Secondary Education), Rodney Creech (Agriculture), Phil Plummer (Constitutional Resolutions), Darrell Kick (Energy and Natural Resources), Scott Lipps (Public Health Policy), and Marilyn John (State and Local Government). While not indicated in a memo to the House that announced the action, Stephens’ decision appears to be a retaliatory response to those individuals’ financial support of Republican primary candidates who were running against incumbent House Republicans in the March primary election. In addition to the power and control a chairmanship post brings, committee chairs also receive an additional \$9,000 yearly stipend for that position.

Rep. Gayle Manning will replace Bird as chair of the education committee, and Rep. Beth Lear has filled the vacant seat left by Bird’s ouster. There has been no action on either Senate Bill (SB) 168 or HB 432 since the last update. The committee will meet next on May 21.

The House did not vote on HB 183 (same-sex bathrooms at higher education institutions and K-12 schools) or SB 83 (higher education reform) this week.

The House Higher Education Committee will meet on May 14 and May 15 to hear testimony on the “benefits of the Science of Reading,” according to a memo from committee Chairman Rep. Tom Young. Young is scheduling hearings for interested parties and invited individuals and entities over the next two months. The following entities and individuals will testify next week: Fordham Institute, National Council on Teacher Quality, Ohio P-20 Literacy Collaborative, the Center for Excellence in Education, Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Education Mike Duffey, and Director of the Department of Education and Workforce Steve Dackin. Additional information on the committee’s plans is forthcoming.

### **State Board of Education**

The State Board of Education will hold its monthly meeting on May 13 next week. Despite previous indications, the board’s agenda does not include a resolution that would increase licensure fees. The panel is likely to wait for such an action until after the legislature recesses for the summer. By that point, it will be known whether an appropriation was secured to fill the panel’s multi-million-dollar budget shortfall and the degree to which or whether a licensure fee raise is necessary. Meanwhile, Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft has indicated that, should an appropriation be secured, a licensure fee increase would likely be in the \$25-\$50 range, despite previously indicating it might be a 50% increase.

# Ohio Gongwer 5/7/24

## Teacher Grade Band Consolidation Draws Pushback

Lawmakers are being asked to change course on a prior decision to go from three to two educator licensure grade bands.

The [Senate Education](#) Committee on Tuesday received in-person and written testimony from about two-dozen individuals opposed to operating budget ([HB 33](#)) language to that effect, which would be reversed by a proposal ([SB 219](#)) from [Sen. Catherine Ingram](#) (D-Cincinnati).

Under HB33's language, which remains to be fully implemented at the agency level, the prior PK-5, 4-9 and 7-12 grade bands are set to be replaced with PK-8 and 6-12.

Nicole Whitaker, who testified on behalf of the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, said the budget provision was aimed at easing teacher staffing issues but could have the opposite effect.

"Changing the grade bands will dilute the quality of middle-grade teachers specifically," she said. "Providing these teachers with a less comprehensive program may lead to even higher rates of attrition."

Tarina Cosgriff, an adult college student preparing to change careers to become a middle school teacher, said the creation of a K-8 grade band would "undermine their professional identity and autonomy."

"Teachers choose to specialize in certain grade levels and subject areas based on their interests, strengths, and passions, and having the licensure flexibility to fill any open district position from preschool through 8th grade may render a teacher's reasons for becoming a teacher irrelevant," she said.

Emma DeWeese, a sophomore teacher candidate at Marietta College, said she is currently enrolled in a dual licensure program for middle childhood and special education.

"If the grade bands were expanded to pre-k to 8th and 6th to 12th, dual licensure programs like Marietta College's would be discontinued," she said.

Asked by Chair [Sen. Andy Brenner](#) (R-Delaware) what classes she is taking specific to middle education, DeWeese pointed to adolescent psychology as an example.

Anita O'Mellan, who teaches math and math education at Youngstown State University, said the broader grade band would lead to teacher candidates losing out on important content knowledge.

"It is not possible to thoroughly prepare candidates to teach all the subjects at all the grade levels in a comprehensive P-8 license," she said.

Bradford Findell, associate director of mathematics programs for teachers at Ohio State University, similarly said he thinks HB33's changes will weaken educator preparation across the state.

"As a member of the advisory committee for Ohio's most recent mathematics learning standards, and based on more than 10 years of experience using such standards to inform mathematics content courses for teachers, I confidently affirm that there is too much content in the K-8 mathematics standards for teachers to become competent in this area while also mastering content in three other subject areas," he said.

Melissa Cropper, president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, said the prior grad bands "uphold benchmarks of proficiency, knowledge, and skills essential for educators to lead classrooms."

"While we sympathize with the difficulties superintendents are having in filling positions, there is no evidence that the change to the current grade bands will solve the problem," she said. "The wider grade bands do nothing to increase the number of people entering the profession and could potentially have the opposite effect of keeping people out of the profession for fear that they may be placed in a grade level that is out of their comfort zone."

Brenner asked if having a general license for K-12 but then certifying them in certain areas of interest would be a better system.

"That's a concept I would like to take back to our membership and think it through," Cropper said, adding that she was not sure such a change would address schools' existing staffing issues.



## Education Students, Instructors Urge Reversal of Budget's Teacher Licensure Grade Band Changes

### Bills in this Story

[SB219](#) REGARDING EDUCATOR LICENSE GRADE BANDS ([Ingram, C](#))

[HB33](#) FY24-25 OPERATING BUDGET ([Edwards, J](#))

### Mentioned in this Story

[Sen. Andrew Brenner](#) (R-Columbus)

[Sen. Catherine Ingram](#) (D-Columbus)

[Sen. Vernon Sykes](#) (D-Columbus)

Instructors and students in teacher preparation programs Tuesday asked the Senate Education Committee to reverse budget bill changes that collapsed teacher licensure grade bands from three to two, arguing they ignore the realities of child development, dilute content knowledge and could worsen teacher shortages.

Tuesday's committee meeting included proponent testimony on SB219 (Ingram), which would reinstate the preK-5, 4-9 and 7-12 licensure bands, which were converted into K-8 and 6-12 bands under HB33 (Edwards).

"The change to PK-8 and 6-12 is problematic because it dilutes the content and pedagogical preparation for teachers across the grade level bands, resulting in weakened student learning. PK-5 licensure provides a solid foundation in child development and preparation in instructional strategies for the youngest learners, which are significantly different from appropriate instructional strategies for middle-level learners. 4-9 licensure incorporates much more substantial content area preparation allowing for deeper content coverage and the use of grade-level appropriate strategies for students in the middle grades," said Nicole Whitaker, a former middle grades math and science teacher now teaching at the collegiate level. She testified on behalf of the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Whitaker argued the new grade bands will dilute the quality of middle grades teachers, which could lead to even higher attrition rates, worsening the teacher shortage rather than improving it.

Tarina Cosgriff, who is now in college pursuing a middle childhood educator license as part of



mid-life career change, said the changes will either have to increase the number of required hours or reduce the depth of knowledge.

“If I had been confronted with grade bands of P-8 and 6-12 when I decided to become a teacher, I may have chosen to study 6-12 math, but it’s also possible that I would have decided the courseload was too onerous and opted not to pursue the career path. For those who do move ahead with a P-8 license, in addition to increasing the required time and financial commitments, this change will undermine their professional identity and autonomy. Teachers choose to specialize in certain grade levels and subject areas based on their interests, strengths, and passions, and having the licensure flexibility to fill any open district position from preschool through 8th grade may render a teacher’s reasons for becoming a teacher irrelevant,” Cosgriff said.

She asked the committee to consider the concept that their child’s preschool teacher would be the one to teach them 8th grade science as well.

Emma DeWeese, a Marietta College teacher preparation student, said the dual licensure program she’s enrolled in for middle childhood education and special education is imperiled by the HB33 changes, because of the breadth of content that will be required for such broad grade bands.

“Ohio’s large special needs student population needs teachers with the ability to serve their needs. Rather than expanding the grade bands; there needs to be a focus on a well-rounded higher education for teachers. By providing teacher candidates with the tools to work with all learners, there will be a greater understanding of how to succeed and less burnout,” DeWeese said.

Sen. Catherine Ingram (D-Cincinnati) asked DeWeese about the dual certification issue. DeWeese said it’s important that more teachers are educated to serve students with disabilities, given that there are many students with undocumented disabilities or other struggles.

Sen. Andrew Brenner (R-Delaware), the committee chair, asked DeWeese what courses she’s taken that specifically focus on middle childhood students. DeWeese said she’s only a sophomore so she’s not gotten that deep into coursework yet, but noted she’d just completed an adolescent psychology course. She also noted she’s better able to concentrate on specific subjects than she would be if she needed to be prepared to teach all subjects to younger students.

Anita O’Mellan, a math and teacher education professor at Youngstown State University (YSU), said math and science teacher candidates at YSU take 25 semester hours of math and 29 hours of science for the 4-9 licensure band. For a preK-8 licensure, candidates would



...only take eight and nine hours, respectively. “Also, methods classes that now typically focus on the grade levels in a P-5 or 4-9 license would need to be broadened to encompass the additional grade levels. It is not possible to thoroughly prepare candidates to teach all the subjects at all the grade levels in a comprehensive P-8 license,” she said.

Sen. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron) asked if teachers are strictly prohibited from teaching outside their grade band. O’Mellan said state law already allows teachers to work up to two grades outside their bands.

Melissa Cropper, president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, said there’s no evidence wider grade bands will help to address a teacher shortage as hoped.

“The wider grade bands do nothing to increase the number of people entering the profession and could potentially have the opposite effect of keeping people out of the profession for fear that they may be placed in a grade level that is out of their comfort zone (for example, someone who loves early elementary grades potentially being moved into a middle school position). In addition, moving away from the 2018 grade bands has been, and continues to be, disruptive for the training and development of new teachers,” she said.

Speaking to the importance of specialization, Cropper said she spent the first several years of her career in a 7-12 building, then was moved to a K-6 building. “As well as I could handle middle school and high school students, those kindergarteners ran all over me,” she said.

Brenner asked Cropper about the concept of general education licensure but with certifications for specific focus areas. Cropper said her organization has not considered that before and would want to think it through with the membership. She said she’s not sure how that would solve the problem.

Melissa Asken Edgehouse, professor of education at the University of Mount Union, described the differences in content knowledge training requirements among grade bands.

“My daughter is in 7th grade, and she’s currently taking a high school math course: Algebra I. She recently took her end of course exam, and I hope she did OK. Truthfully, if we have only two grade bands, I’d only want a grades 6-12 licensed educator to serve as her teacher. It would take a very special P-8 educator to be savvy enough to teach Algebra I to advanced 7th graders. In other words, I wouldn’t want a P-8 licensed teacher for my daughter, nor would I want to hire a P-8 licensed teacher for this course if I were in the position to do so,” she said.

Brenner asked if there’s room to add more content knowledge by eliminating some general requirements. Asken Edgehouse said each institution has a specific mission that drives their programming; Mt. Union has a desire for all students to take certain courses, regardless of



major, she said.

*The Hannah Report*

Her testimony was submitted by Mary Heather Munger, president of the Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Dawn Shinew and James Hannon, co-chairs of State University Education Deans; and Diana Garlough, president of the Ohio Association of Private Colleges for Teacher Education. They said reversal of the HB33 language would enable continued emphasis on specific developmental periods and deeper content knowledge, and preserve inclusive programs that prepare students simultaneously for general and special education.

Numerous others provided testimony in person or in writing, including Bradford Findell, associate director of mathematics programs for teachers at Ohio State University; Bailey Balderson, a University of Mount Union teacher preparation student; Tanya Judd, dean of education at Marietta College; Kaylee Booth, a Marietta College student; Chris Irick, a teacher; William Green, a part-time faculty member at YSU; Stephanie Simpson of the Association for Middle Level Education; Jacqueline Yahn, associate professor of teacher education at Ohio University; Mathew Felton-Koestler; Dorothy Erb, dean emeritus of education at Marietta College; Jarrod Hartzler of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education; Frans Doppen, an Ohio University education professor; Karl Kosko, a math professor at Kent State University and former teacher; Thomas Knestrict of the Xavier University School of Education; Laura Saylor, dean of the School of Education at Mt. St. Joseph University; and Michelle Elia, a literacy professor at Marietta College.

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