



March 15, 2011

State Board of Education  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear State Board of Education Members,

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Ohio's 35<sup>th</sup> State Superintendent of Public Instruction. During the past 2 ½ years, I have had a unique opportunity to view education from not only a state perspective but a national one as well. All of my experiences have been professionally rewarding and give me great hope for the students of Ohio.

During a meeting on Friday, March 11, 2011, with two of Governor Kasich's staff, it was made known to me that my tenure as the State Superintendent was coming to an end. Specifically, I was informed that if I chose not to create an exit strategy, I would soon be replaced by a majority vote of the State Board of Education. Thus, I intend to resign effective April 30, 2011, in order to ensure that this issue does not become a distraction to the important educational issues facing the state of Ohio. During the next several weeks, I will work diligently with my staff to develop and exercise a smooth transition plan.

As I reflect on the past 2 ½ years, I must acknowledge that Ohio's education system has much to celebrate. During my tenure, I was proud to work with a highly talented staff at the Ohio Department of Education. Despite budget and staff reductions, they have remained committed to, and focused on, the challenges facing education. From redesigning processes and procedures to becoming more client-focused, ODE has enhanced its technical services and support to local education agencies. Additionally, there are numerous innovative activities in which we have been engaged including, but not limited to:

- The development of a series of rigorous standards, adopted by the State Board in 2010, and the ensuing design of new assessments and new graduation requirements.
- Successful launch of the credit flexibility program, which respects work done outside of formal educational frameworks.
- Creation of the new teacher four-year residency program as well as enhanced teacher and principal evaluation systems.
- Expansion of the Woodrow Wilson STEM Program.
- Engagement in the development of a longitudinal student data system.
- Redesign of the organizational structure within the Department.
- Renewed focus on closing the achievement gaps.
- Launch of a student-wide survey of MS and HS students' perceptions of school.
- Engagement in the design of Next Generation learning environments (NxGL).

I mention these as only as a small sample of the complex and rewarding work in which we have been engaged to better serve LEAs and deepen possibilities for educators, students and their families.

My frequent interactions with LEAs and education organizations demonstrate time and time again that an incredible number and array of educators and stakeholders have accepted the challenges of preparing our students for *their* future, not *our* present. Across the state, there are countless examples of innovative designs that are challenging the status quo, expanded networks that allow LEAs to share and replicate promising practices, and increased engagement with stakeholders that bring new voices to transformation initiatives. An expansion of these efforts will continue to strengthen Ohio's education system.

Certainly, the fact that Ohio was one of only twelve states to receive funding through the federal *Race to the Top* program illustrates the great potential that lies in Ohio to realize deep and meaningful education transformation. I was proud to lead this effort and work collaboratively with more than one hundred stakeholders to ensure Ohio's award of \$400,000,000. Ohio's strategy as defined in *Race to the Top* will certainly benefit our 1.8 million students.

During the past 2 ½ years, Ohio has strengthened its presence on the national education stage. From my serving on the Board of Directors for the Council of Chief State School Officers to our increased presence on national committees and organizations, to ODE being selected to engage in various national initiatives, it is clear that others believe in the ability of Ohio to be a significant player in education reform. Such opportunities celebrate the solid commitment Ohio has to developing deep and meaningful partnerships with foundations, organizations and businesses.

As my tenure as State Superintendent comes to a close, I will always cherish the opportunity I had to represent Ohio's education system and, most especially, our students. Having spent 28 of my 36 years in education in this great state, I am deeply appreciative of the incredibly talented colleagues with whom I have interacted. They have graciously supported me, strengthened my practices and deepened my passion for enhancing education for all students. I will carry these treasured partnerships, as well as many of my lessons learned, to my next professional opportunity: a position affecting education on the national level. I am especially appreciative of the staffs in the Crestwood Local School District, the Shaker Heights City School District, the Orange City School District, the West Geauga Local School District and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. My employment in these districts nurtured my growth, provided me with a rich team of colleagues and helped me to adopt Ohio as my home. Although I will relocate out of Ohio, it will always hold a special place in my heart.

It has been my goal to never allow a child's zip code to predetermine the quality of his/her education. That has been my mission and I will continue to carry this passion into the next phase of my career.

Sincerely,



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