



Week of Jan. 15, 2024

House education committee considers cash incentives for student attendance and graduation

A bipartisan duo that includes a term-limited political heavyweight defended a bill this week that would provide cash payments to eligible students for high attendance rates and for those who graduate from high school. [House Bill \(HB\) 348](#), sponsored by Reps. **Bill Seitz** and **Dani Isaacsohn**, would establish two pilot programs: the Attendance Incentive Pilot Program and the Graduation Incentive Pilot Program.

Under the Attendance Incentive Pilot Program, kindergartners and ninth graders in select districts would be eligible for either \$500 annually, \$150 per quarter, or \$25 every two weeks if they (1) have an attendance rate of greater than 90% and (2) attend a school whose chronic absenteeism is in the highest quartile in the state. Under the Graduation Incentive Pilot Program, high school graduates with a 3.5 or higher GPA would be eligible for up to \$750 if they reside in a Title I school district that also ranks in the lowest quintile of districts in the state on its graduation rate. Graduates with a 3.0 or higher GPA are eligible for up to \$500 and all graduates are eligible for at least \$250, provided they attend a qualifying district.

Meanwhile, the committee also heard sponsor testimony on [HB 339](#), which would create an educational savings account for students enrolled in a non-tax supported, nonpublic school.

DEW holds first public meeting with Dackin at helm

Literacy, workforce, and student wellbeing – those are the stated priorities of the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), according to **Steve Dackin** during his first public meeting as DEW director. After opening remarks from Dackin, senior DEW staff provided an overview of budget implementation, the status of literacy and Science of Reading efforts, and pending administrative rules.

DEW staff announced the approved vendor list for high-quality instructional materials aligned to the Science of Reading will be debuted by the end of January. DEW staff also debuted a new tool for calculating a district's state funding with updated property valuation data, which is accessible by [clicking here](#). Staff further discussed that professional development stipends may be larger than the planned \$1,200 or \$400. Since districts pay staff the amounts for completing state-required trainings, those payments count as employee compensation and trigger increased retirement system contributions, DEW staff explained. As a result, DEW will reportedly cover those increased costs. Meeting materials from the meeting are [accessible here](#).

On Tap – Next Week

The Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform will hold its second meeting on Wednesday next week, featuring invited testimony from the County Auditors' Association of Ohio and the Ohio Board of Tax Appeals.

The Senate Education Committee will feature sponsor testimony for the following bills:

- [HB 214](#), which requires districts adopt a policy that (1) prohibits compelling staff to affirmatively ascribe to or opine about a political or ideological belief or affiliation, (2) prohibits using statements of commitment to political or ideological beliefs or affiliations to evaluate employees or job applicants, and (3) prohibits using statements of commitment to political or ideological beliefs or affiliations as part of a student's academic evaluation;
- [SB 205](#), which expands the existing drug abuse curriculum and requires that instruction to be provided annually; and
- [HB 250](#), which renames the Military Enlistment Seal as part of the graduation seal system to become the Military Seal and qualifies a student to earn the seal if they were accepted a scholarship to enter the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or were appointed to a United States military service academy.

Finally, [HB 344](#), which would eliminate replacement levies and further curtail school districts' and individuals' ability to challenge property values, will have opponent testimony in the House Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday.

Heard around the Statehouse

"In my messaging (to superintendents at the regional meetings of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators), I am challenging superintendents around leadership of this issue. Because to me, this is about leadership. Yes, there's a lot of technical things that need to be done, but we are providing the framework to do it, and now it comes down to will...If you want a seat at the table, then this is the opportunity. Get the results that we need for our kids and our families." - **Steve Dackin**, director of the Department of Education and Workforce, speaking at the DEW public meeting on literacy and the Science of Reading.

"Is this going to set a precedent for our young kids, as young as kindergarten, that we're going to pay you to abide by the laws moving forward? I mean, are we going to get to the point where we're paying rapists not to rape?" - Rep. **Josh Williams**, asking a question to the sponsors of [HB 348](#), which would create a cash incentive program that hopes to boost attendance and graduation rates.

"The deterrent effect of the penalties for rape do help stop rape. The deterrent effect of the penalties for truant officers is about zero, because most districts don't even have them or if they do, they can't begin to do the job. We have tried just about everything else when it comes to chronic absenteeism and low graduation rates." - Rep. **Bill Seitz**, responding to Rep. Williams' question during the hearing on HB 348.

"The stick approach to compel attendance has not worked. And the other incentives that we've handed out, I guess aren't a sufficiently good incentive to get people to change their behavior. Maybe the pizza's not as good as it should be. I don't know." - Rep. Seitz, again responding to Rep. Williams.