

State's new high-school graduation exams could doom poor kids to failure

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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

It sounded like a good idea three years ago when state government leaders instituted new graduation exams to make sure kids were prepared for college or a job.

That is, until last fall, when state officials began to look at the sobering number of kids who could be denied a high-school diploma next year when the new requirements are to take effect.

Some districts and charter schools could see graduation rates plunge by as much as 70 percent, particularly those serving poor minority students. Some charters might not graduate a single student, according to projections compiled by the Ohio Department of Education in response to a superintendents' march at the Statehouse.

The figures are expected to improve somewhat as more high-school juniors meet the requirements in the coming year. However, that won't solve the crisis.

On Tuesday, state Superintendent Paolo DeMaria is to present a solution to the State Board of Education: giving students who fall short on end-of-course exams the ability to earn a diploma for having good school attendance, maintaining a 2.5 grade-point average, having a job while going to school or performing community service. State lawmakers would have to approve the plan.

But two decades into the school-accountability movement that created charter schools and vouchers, that won't erase data that reveal Ohio has a two-tiered education system based on income and race. Under the new tests, graduation rates would plummet for Ohio's poorest and heavily minority schools, with only 36 percent of juniors having met, or being on track to meet, the new benchmarks, according to the Education Department projections.

Charters, which are public schools operated privately and once were billed as a free-market solution to improving results, have the worst numbers in the state.

Almost tied for last are the state's Big 8 urban districts, the only ones designated "very high student poverty" by the Ohio Department of Education. Columbus City Schools could go from graduating 74 percent of students to 37 percent. Dayton City Schools' graduation rate could go from 75 percent to 27 percent.

But it's far from just a big-city issue: 42 districts in counties all over the state – rural, small-town and suburban – would graduate less than half of their current juniors under the new system.

More than 86 percent of students in the state's wealthiest suburbs already have met, or are expected to meet, the

new requirements. But that's still a 13 percentage-point drop for wealthy districts such as Hilliard, Dublin and Worthington, considered by the state as "very low student poverty" schools. Just those three together would graduate almost 400 fewer seniors each year under the new tests.

So what's the answer? One solution considered by the state board was simply to lower the score required on a series of tests from 18 so that more kids passed. The Education Department calculated the passing rates all the way down to 14 points, but the numbers apparently didn't improve enough. Though the low-poverty suburban districts went back up to about 92 percent of seniors graduating, still only about half of poor urban and charter

kids would graduate, documents show.

Giving students extra credit is essentially the solution that DeMaria will present to the state board Tuesday during its monthly meeting in Columbus. It was recommended recently by a review panel that the state school board appointed after scrapping plans to temporarily lower the scores needed on end-of-course exams to graduate.

Beginning with the class of 2018, this year's juniors, students must accumulate at least 18 points of a possible 36 on seven high school end-of-course exams to graduate. Students also have the option of getting a remediation-free score on a college-entrance exam, or obtaining an industry credential to show they are ready for a job.

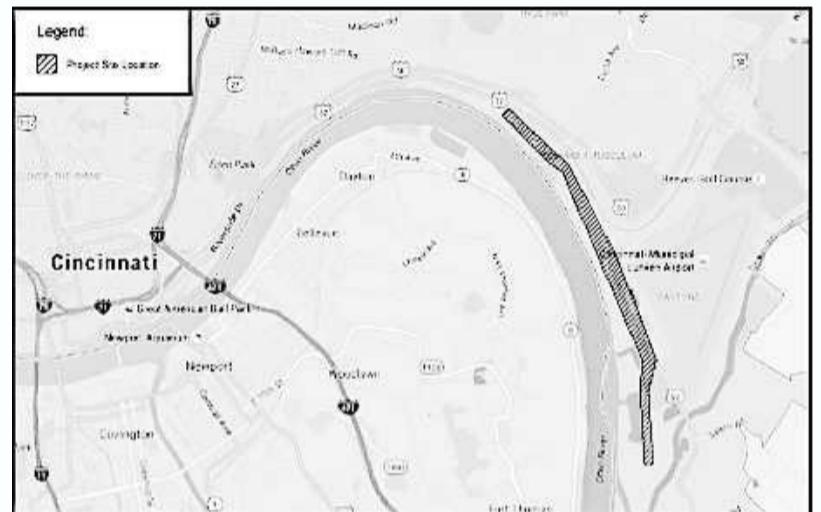


DISPATCH FILE PHOTO

Under the new state exams, some Ohio districts and charter schools could see graduation rates plunge by as much as 70 percent, particularly those serving poor minority students.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED MAJOR UTILITY FACILITY

Duke Energy Ohio, Inc., (Duke Energy Ohio) proposes to improve the transmission system in southwestern Ohio by upgrading an existing transmission line in Hamilton County. The purpose of the Duke Energy Ohio Line D0008 Natural Gas Pipeline Replacement Project (Project) is to replace aging, coated steel pipe, over a distance of approximately 3.31 miles. Approximately 2.54 miles of the Project is proposed to be collocated within the existing right-of-way. The Project location and general layout are shown on the accompanying map.



Duke Energy Ohio has filed a Letter of Notification with the Ohio Power Siting Board (Board), under Case No. 17-0328-GA-BLN. This number should be included in all communications with respect to the Project. The Letter of Notification to construct, operate, and maintain this facility is now pending before the Board. Comments and/or petitions to intervene in the Letter of Notification will be accepted by the Board up to 10 days following the publication date of this notice, pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code Rules 4906-2-12 and 4906-6-08. Petitions or comments should be addressed to Ohio Power Siting Board, 180 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio, 43215, and must reference Case No. 17-0328-GA-BLN.

The following public officials and agencies have been served with the Application, as required by Ohio Power Siting Board regulations:

City of Cincinnati

John Cranley, Mayor

Matthew Shad, Zoning Administrator

Hamilton County Commissioners

Todd Portune

Denise Driehaus

Chris Monzel

A copy of the application is available for public inspection at the main office of Duke Energy Ohio at 139 E. Fourth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, and at the offices of the Ohio Power Siting Board, 180 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. It is also available on the Duke Energy Ohio website, at: <http://www.duke-energy.com/eastendreplacement>, and on the Ohio Power Siting Board's website, at: www.opsb.ohio.gov. A copy of the application has been sent to the following library:

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

800 Vine Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

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