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**Bridging Resources, Information, and Data from**

**Government and Education**

**For the Week of January 19, 2015**

**Federal, National and U.S. Department of Education**

[**President's Education Plans Includes Tax Credit Changes**](http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=198571) **Hannah**

Previewing President Barack Obama's Tuesday night State of the Union address, the White House released a policy brief on tax code reforms that includes details of how he would reshape incentives for education savings. The White House says the proposal is intended to "simplify, consolidate and better target tax-based financial aid." The plan would make the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), created in 2009 but set to expire in two years, permanent and allow it to grow with inflation. The permanent credit would take the place of the Lifetime Learning Credit and the tuition and fees deduction, which would be eliminated. The maximum refundable portion of the AOTC would also increase to $1,500.

[**Free Community College Plan Tops Obama's Education Wish List**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/college_bound/2015/01/free_community_college_plan_tops_obamas_education_wish_list.html) **Education Week**

President Barack Obama's proposal to give Americans two years of free community college was the most ambitious education item that he presented in his State of the Union address last night. Previewed earlier this month in Tennessee, America's College Promise has been pitched by the administration as a way to partner with states to make college affordable and equip workers with the skills they need to be competitive in the job market.

[**In State of the Union, Obama Pitches College Access, Child-Care Aid**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2015/01/sotu_obama_pitches_college_access.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=campaignk-12) **Education Week**

President Barack Obama used his penultimate State of the Union address to call for a dramatic expansion in college access and increased investments in early childhood, including help for parents in covering childcare costs. But both proposals are part of a broad overhaul of the tax system that is already getting the thumbs-down from a Republican-controlled Congress.  Meanwhile, K-12 policy largely took a back seat, despite an escalating debate in Congress over federally mandated student testing.

[**U.S. House Committee Solicits Comments for Head Start Act Rewrite**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/early_years/2015/01/us_house_committee_solicits_comments_for_head_start_rewrite.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=earlyyears) **Education Week**

The U.S. Senate education panel might be ready to rumble on a rewrite of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the House is expected to follow suit. But it's clear that K-12 isn't the only thing on lawmakers' minds: The House education committee kicked off the new Congress with some background proposals for revising the Head Start Act.

**Ohio Legislation Update (recent bill action in red)**

**131st General Assembly**

***House***

*No legislation has been introduced.*

***Senate***

*No legislation has been introduced.*

**Ohio Budget/Politics**

[**New House education committee chairman wants to cut the "glut" of testing, have less "toxic" talks about the Common Core**](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2015/01/new_house_ed_committee_chair_wants_more_money_for_schools_cuts_to_the_testing_glut_and_a_less_toxic_look_at_the_common_core.html#incart_river) **The Cleveland Plain Dealer**

State Rep. Bill Hayes expects to have a busy first year as chairman of the education committee of the Ohio House, with legislation on the Common Core, standardized testing and charter schools all likely to come before the panel. "Mostly I've been getting condolences," joked Hayes, 71, a Licking County Republican. He replaces Gerald Stebelton, a Lancaster Republican, who left office at the end of 2014 because of term limits and returns to his law practice.

[**House Announces Committee Assignments for 131st General Assembly**](http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=198581) **Hannah**

Speaker of the House Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) Wednesday announced the committee assignments for the 131st General Assembly as well as members for Controlling Board, Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) and the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC) through entries in the day's journal.

[**Senate Democrats Outline Legislative Priorities**](http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=198582) **Hannah**

Sen. Tom Sawyer (D-Akron) repeated a familiar theme Wednesday as he lamented the continuing use of the budget to pass substantive policy issues worthy of standalone legislation and the ensuing hearings in the committees of jurisdiction. Sawyer, who has served in the Ohio House, U.S. Congress and as mayor of Akron, has repeatedly expressed his concern about the truncation of the legislative process, calling budget deliberations "a very long lame duck session." He also characterized it as a collapse of the lawmaking process where important changes often receive little or no debate in the budget process.

[**Lt. Gov. Talks Up Career-Technical Education for Ohio's Economic Success**](http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=198585) **Hannah**

Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor told the audience of a career-technical education conference Wednesday that their mission is in line with the administration's goal of getting more Ohioans into desirable jobs. Speaking at the Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education legislative seminar, Taylor said more work is needed to dispel the perception that a bachelor's degree is the only path to career success -- a line that drew applause from the crowd. "I think there's a better realization today and has been over the last couple years that not everybody will go to college and get a four-year college degree -- but also not everybody needs to go to college and get a four-year college degree to get a good-paying job," she said.

[**Senate Democrats want minimum wage increase, affordable college**](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2015/01/senate_democrats_want_minimum.html#incart_river) **The Cleveland Plain Dealer**

Increasing Ohio's minimum wage, making Medicaid expansion permanent and making college more affordable are among the priorities Senate Democrats said Wednesday they plan to push for during the next two years.

[**Senate Releases Committee Assignments**](http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=198607) **Hannah**

Democrats appear poised to play a bigger role in the Ohio Senate in 131st General Assembly, at least as far as budget deliberations go, under the committee assignments announced Friday by Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina). Not only did the Senate increase the number of finance subcommittees, but Faber also appointed a Democrat as vice chair of each. According to Faber spokesman Joshua Eck, "The goal is to encourage as much bipartisan collaboration as possible not only at the subcommittee stage but also throughout the entire budget process and beyond. "Sen. Faber views the subcommittees as somewhat of an idea incubator, and he plans to challenge them to generate substantive reforms that could be incorporated into the budget."

**Ohio Department of Education/State Board of Education**

[**Kids from 255 Ohio schools can seek private-school vouchers**](http://www.wfmj.com/story/27899793/kids-from-255-ohio-schools-can-seek-private-school-vouchers) **WMFJ**

The Ohio Department of Education says students from 255 facilities in 31 districts will be eligible for the next round of state-funded scholarships that help youth from consistently underperforming public schools attend private schools. The department says the eligibility list of poorly performing schools includes 49 that weren't eligible last year and two that are part of the EdChoice Scholarship Program for the first time.

[**Ohio DOE Tweaks New Mentorship Program Requirements**](http://wyso.org/post/ohio-doe-tweaks-new-mentorship-program-requirements)  **WYSO**

Governor John Kasich’s new mentoring program for school children is undergoing some changes after objections over its requirement that faith-based organizations be involved. The program, Community Connectors, provides up to $500,000 to partnerships that provide mentoring to at-risk Ohio students. But in setting up the rules last month, a group led by Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Richard Ross required that applicants include a faith-based organization.  The American Civil Liberties Union objected.  So now the Department of Education changed the definition of “faith-based.”

[**Many Ohio charter schools overstated attendance rates, state investigation finds**](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2015/01/many_ohio_charter_schools_over.html#incart_river) **The Cleveland Plain Dealer**

Several Ohio charter schools have far fewer students showing up to class than they report to the state, according to a state auditor's investigation released Thursday. Unannounced visits by state investigators to 30 charter schools around the state found seven schools with "unusually high" attendance variances between 34 percent and 100 percent, according to the report from Auditor Dave Yost's office.

[**Ohio charter schools may be charging taxpayers for empty seats; Akron’s White Hat among those cited**](http://www.ohio.com/news/break-news/ohio-charter-schools-may-be-charging-taxpayers-for-empty-seats-akron-s-white-hat-among-those-cited-1.560576) **Akron Beacon Journal**

Thirty auditors fanned out across Ohio last fall to count the students sitting in 30 charter schools and compare totals with the numbers those schools claimed in order to receive taxpayer dollars.

[**Vouchers available to more Ohio students**](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/01/20/vouchers-available-to-more.html)  **Columbus Dispatch**

Students at more than 250 of Ohio’s worst-performing schools, including 73 in Franklin County, will have an opportunity to attend private schools next year. The tax-funded EdChoice vouchers are now available to students assigned to 255 schools in 31 districts statewide for the 2015-16 school year, according to the Ohio Department of Education.

**Early Learning**

[**White House Pitches Competitive Grant Program Aimed at Improving Child Care**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2015/01/white_house_pitches_new_compet.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=campaignk-12) **Education Week**

President Barack Obama made a big pitch for expanding federal child-care help in this State of the Union address—and then again in a speech at the University of Kansas Thursday. Now the White House has released some more details of its plan to expand access to child-care programs—including a proposal for a $100 million new, competitive grant program to help states create, put in place, and evaluate new ways of delivering child care.

[**Pre-K funding for 2014-15**](http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/16/97/11697.pdf) **Education Commission of the States**

Most states now view access to high-quality preschool programs as a critical long-term economic investment in the future workforce. For the third year in a row both Republican and Democratic policymakers are making significant investments in state-funded pre-K programs. State Pre-K Funding: 2014-15 fiscal year, a new ECS analysis of 2014-15 appropriations by the 50 states, found that 28 states plus the District of Columbia increased their investments in pre-K; state investment rose by 12 percent.

[**Child Care Garners Attention in State of the Union Address, Again**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/early_years/2015/01/obama_features_child_care_in_state_of_the_union_again.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=earlyyears) **Education Week**

President Barack Obama mentioned the phrase "child care" eight times in his State of the Union Address last night, notes the *Wall Street Journal*. That's more often than he said the words "terrorist," "middle class," or "opportunity."

[**Preschool Programs That Treat Trauma Lay Groundwork for School Success**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/early_years/2015/01/preschool_programs_that_treat_trauma_lay_groundwork_for_school_success.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=earlyyears) **Education Week**

Preschool programs focused on treating children who have suffered from trauma continue to spring up across the country with the aim of preparing the most fragile young learners for kindergarten and beyond. A Chicago-based program recently featured on The Hechinger Report serves children as young as 2-years-old who have witnessed or been subject to violence in their homes or neighborhoods.

**Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

[**Ohio high-stakes student testing is too onerous; officials want to scale back**](http://www.ohio.com/news/break-news/ohio-high-stakes-student-testing-is-too-onerous-officials-want-to-scale-back-1.558744) **Akron Beacon Journal**

After more than a year of complaints from educators and stakeholders, the Ohio Department of Education is recommending that the legislature scale back its rigorous schedule of student testing. The education department announced Wednesday that it is asking lawmakers to ease the testing burden for students and teachers after 400 of Ohio’s school districts and community schools responded to a state survey.

[**State Schools chief committed to reduce student testing burden**](http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20150117/state-schools-chief-committed-to-reduce-student-testing-burden) **Willoughby News-Herald**

Is the amount of testing taking place in schools excessive?

[**Advocacy Groups Oppose Removal of Special Education Testing Caps**](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/speced/2015/01/advocacy_groups_oppose_removal.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=onspecialeducation) **Education Week**

Lawmakers are wading into the complicated issue of accountability tests as they ponder changes to the law currently known as No Child Left Behind, but a group of disability advocacy organizations are already saying they don't want to see one change that has been floated—an elimination of the cap on students who can be tested to "alternate achievement standards."

**College and Career Readiness**

[**Pathways expand for early college credit**](http://www.mydaytondailynews.com/news/news/pathways-expand-for-early-college-credit/njqL6/) **Dayton Daily News**

A week after President Barack Obama called for access to free community college nationwide, state officials are trying to draw attention to an already-available Ohio program that lets high school students earn college credit for free. Both initiatives are aimed at giving more students access to college at a time when rising tuition closes doors to some families, or forces students to prop those doors open via heavy debt loads.

[**Cuyahoga Community College receives $500,000 to develop program to award high school diplomas to adults**](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2015/01/cuyahoga_community_college_rec_4.html#incart_river) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

[Cuyahoga Community College](http://www.tri-c.edu/) plans to develop a new approach to provide high school diplomas and job training to adults. The Ohio Department of Education awarded a $500,000 planning grant to the college to develop a program to help adults 22 an older who have dropped out of high school. More than 1.1 million adults in Ohio lack a high school diploma and the Adult Career Opportunity Pilot Program was mandated by state law to help that segment of the population.

[**Flexibility and Graduation**](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/21/study-finds-mix-part-time-and-full-time-enrollment-can-boost-graduation-rates) **Inside Higher Ed**

Attending college full time isn’t always the best way to get to graduation, at least for adult community college students who have previously pursued a degree and dropped out. That’s the central finding of a new study from a coalition of five higher education groups. The data are based on 12 million student records from the National Student Clearinghouse.

[**Cleveland State University to cut academic programs and invest in others**](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2015/01/cleveland_state_university_to_9.html#incart_river)  **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

Cleveland State University may eliminate a dozen academic programs and invest in more than a dozen others as it prepares to reallocate funds and faculty. Undergraduate programs that may be axed include art history, business biotechnology and multimedia advertising. Those that will likely receive more money and faculty include music therapy, nursing and several engineering programs. But programs will not be closed until current students have completed their studies, Provost Dierdre Mageean told trustees this week.

**Northeast Ohio Schools**

***Cuyahoga County***

[**Bay Village Superintendent Clint Keener focuses on report card in State of the Schools address**](http://www.cleveland.com/bay-village/index.ssf/2015/01/bay_village_superintendent_cli_1.html) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

[**Chagrin Falls school board is not ready to decide fate of its Intermediate School**](http://www.cleveland.com/chagrin-falls/index.ssf/2015/01/chagrin_falls_school_board_is.html) **Sun News**

[**Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools propose tax hike**](http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2015/01/cleveland_heights-university_h_64.html#incart_river) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

[**Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools to put property tax increase on May ballot**](http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2015/01/cleveland_heights-university_h_65.html) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

[**North Royalton Superintendent Greg Gurka praises district performance, cost-per-pupil in State of the Schools speech**](http://www.cleveland.com/north-royalton/index.ssf/2015/01/north_royalton_is_top-performi.html) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

[**Westlake school board considers asking voters for new tax: See 3 proposals**](http://www.cleveland.com/westlake/index.ssf/2015/01/westlake_school_board_weights.html#incart_river) **Northeast Ohio Media Group**

***Geauga County***

[**Berkshire, Ledgemont school boards discuss potential territory transfer**](http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20150122/berkshire-ledgemont-school-boards-discuss-potential-territory-transfer) **Willoughby News-Herald**

[**West Geauga Schools narrows superintendent search to 3 finalists**](http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20150124/west-geauga-schools-narrows-superintendent-search-to-3-finalists) **Willoughby News-Herald**

***Lake County***

[**Mentor elementary school closing because of low enrollment**](http://fox8.com/2015/01/23/mentor-elementary-school-closing-because-of-low-enrollment/) **Fox 8**

***Lorain County***

[**Elyria board chooses seven candidates for superintendent**](http://www.morningjournal.com/general-news/20150122/elyria-board-chooses-seven-candidates-for-superintendent) **The Morning Journal**

[**North Ridgeville School District test smartphone GPS app**](http://www.newsnet5.com/news/science-tech/north-ridgeville-school-district-test-smartphone-gps-app) **NewsNet 5**

***Summit County***

[**Clean audit distinguishes Twinsburg City School District**](http://www.twinsburgbulletin.com/news%20local/2015/01/22/twinsburg-school-district-distinguishes-itself-with-clean-audit) **Twinsburg Bulletin**

[**Nordonia Hills Schools may return busing to all students through eighth grade, leaving high schoolers out**](http://www.the-news-leader.com/news%20local/2015/01/21/nordonia-hills-schools-may-return-busing-to-all-students-through-eighth-grade-leaving) **Nordonia Hills News Leader**

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