



Ohio Federation
of Teachers AFT, AFL-CIO
A Union of Professionals

News Release

For Immediate Release
March 12, 2012

Contact:
Melissa Cropper, OFT President
614-257-4195

School Plan pushed by Governor, Cleveland Mayor Ignores What is Best for Students

Union Focuses on How to Help Students Achieve Through Collaboration

**The following is a statement by
Ohio Federation of Teachers President Melissa Cropper:**

The so-called "Cleveland Plan" put forth by Mayor Jackson and pushed by Governor Kasich today in remarks to the State Board of Education is no plan at all. Sadly, there is nothing in the proposal to benefit students.

The Ohio Federation of Teachers urges state Board of Education members not to accept this plan or today's request for an impromptu resolution of support simply on face value. We understand that this was not part of the Board's regular agenda for this week's meeting and would require emergency action by "suspending the rules." Instead of acting on the spur of the moment, we urge the Board to give this idea more thoughtful review.

The plan lacks any data or methods proven to raise student achievement and should not be supported blindly. Board members would do well to research the proposal, talk with teachers and look for evidence that will improve student outcomes.

Teachers are ready and interested in collaborating to improve Cleveland schools, yet they have been shut out of this process.

In the past, members of the Cleveland Teachers Union have collaborated to make numerous district improvements:

- In order to avoid program cuts and increased class sizes which are bad for students, teachers agreed to reduce their own pay by \$25 million
- To deliver the best mix of teacher skills to students, teachers agreed to reconstitute schools by rebuilding the entire staff assigned to a school building

--- more ---

- To help grow the skills of inexperienced teachers, the teachers union launched a peer review program to mentor and assess skills development
- To more easily place teachers with certain skills where they are needed most, teachers agreed to new transfer policies

Teachers are anxious to discuss with the mayor an idea that directly addresses what is missing from his plan. The New Generation School is a concept for identifying low-performing schools and instituting changes with an intensive focus on math and reading to bring students to grade level. This could begin immediately, is believed to be cost-neutral, and would directly impact student achievement. And it could be shared in detail if the door was open for teachers to discuss ideas in a collaborative way.

We strongly believe that the success of any plan hinges on the degree of collaboration between teachers and administrators.

This plan lacks collaboration with teachers. Teachers have not been permitted to discuss points included in the plan or have their ideas incorporated into the plan. Rather, the plan was developed behind closed doors. Teacher leaders have been invited to attend recent meetings, but clearly a plan was already in place before these conversations took place. In fact, a meeting set for last Saturday to which teachers were invited to share their ideas was cancelled and followed by comments by the mayor dictating what will be done now. This is not collaboration. This is wrong for students and teachers.

The mayor seems to be pushing for the teachers to present a competing plan. Teachers are not interested in competing. We are interested in collaborating because it takes districts and teachers working together to create what is best for students.

We find it offensive that the governor would repeat, let alone accept, that the business community will hold students hostage by threatening to end support for our neighborhood public schools. Public schools, students and teachers are part of the fabric of our communities across Ohio. We need people working with us to develop reforms that work for our students instead of turning their backs on us if they don't get their way.

###