



Dave Yost • Auditor of State

July 26, 2012

The Honorable Debe Terhar
President of the Ohio Board of Education
5595 Boomer Road
Cincinnati, OH 45247

Dear President Terhar,

Several weeks ago, reports surfaced that staff at the Columbus Public Schools had falsified attendance records. As a result, academic report cards may inaccurately reflect the actual performance of some schools. The Superintendent of Columbus Public Schools asked my office to review the matter.

State Superintendent Heffner and I agreed to conduct a joint investigation, which my office would lead. I am grateful for Dr. Heffner's cooperation and professionalism to date. However, additional developments now present some challenges.

Yesterday, the Ohio Department of Education released a report finding that similar falsification had occurred in Lockland Local Schools. Published reports indicate there may be problems in Toledo as well.

In short, it appears that attendance report rigging is not a localized problem with Columbus Public Schools, but that it may be more systemic – and that raises the question of what role ODE played during the time that false reports were made by multiple schools.

Accordingly, I am writing to you today for the following reasons:

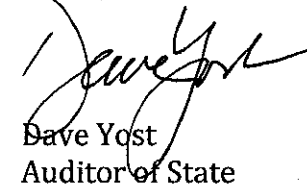
1. After collecting information and consulting with our professional staff, I am advising you that this office is expanding the Columbus Public Schools investigation to a statewide review of attendance reporting practices, including local school districts, community schools and the Ohio Department of Education.
2. I am requesting that the state Board of Education direct the ODE staff to preserve all documents and records, whether paper or electronic, regardless of normal disposition in accordance with public record retention schedules. Criminal charges may or may not result from any referral that might occur as a result of our audit. Accordingly, staff should be advised that tampering

with evidence or witnesses may constitute a criminal act under the relevant provisions of the Ohio Revised Code. I note with regret published reports that the internal auditor at Columbus Public Schools has already been pressured to conclude her work.

3. The Auditor of State will require assistance in data mining certain ODE databases, and access to records and personnel for interviews. I again request the Board instruct staff to cooperate with my staff's requests.

There is no evidence at this time that anyone at ODE is involved in the attendance report rigging, but the apparently widespread nature of the practice begs the question of at least a lack of oversight. Even so, our work must proceed independently of ODE so that the people of Ohio may have confidence in the findings.

Yours,



Dave Yost
Auditor of State

cc: Stan Heffner, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Members of the Ohio State Board of Education
John Kasich, Governor of the State of Ohio
Andrew Brenner, Representative of District 2