

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Written Interview Questions for Tom Hosler

The State Board of Education welcomes your concise response to the interview questions as submitted directly from Board members.

Instructions:

- Listed below are 19 questions divided into the following categories: General Questions, Accountability / Fiscal Responsibility, Innovation, Vision, Servant Leadership, and Collaboration and Facilitation.
- Please select ONE question from the 19 to answer during your in-person interview. Highlight that question and note: Selected for Oral Response.
- Provide your written response to the remaining 18 questions.
- Please respond as thoroughly as you prefer, but please do not exceed 500 words on a single response.
- Please send completed questions to the superintendent search inbox at superintendent.search@education.ohio.gov by noon on Friday, April 8, 2022.

General Questions

1. Please share with us your interpretation regarding the benefits you bring, through your experience and skill sets, to Ohio students.

I have a unique leadership background that includes nearly 30 years of serving students as a teacher, coach, and administrator in both private and public schools in Ohio as well as out-of-state. During this time, I have been a leader in both suburban and rural school districts, some with over 60% poverty and districts with over 15% of students living with a disability. I have been blessed to serve communities as a superintendent for over 22 years, 7 out-of-state and 15 as the leader of Perrysburg Schools. My record is one of proven, authentic leadership; effective collaboration at local, regional, and state levels; and the ability to establish and maintain high standards of performance for students and staff members.

Under normal conditions, the challenges facing educators at the district level, the State Board and the Ohio Department of Education are daunting, and the pandemic has intensified those challenges exponentially. From learning losses to staffing shortages, coupled with a deep political divide statewide and within most of our communities, the pandemic has further complicated the task of educating our children. Now, more than ever, the next State Superintendent must be a tested and proven leader in this climate with a clear vision of what the state can do to meet the educational needs of all our children, the desire and ability to work with a dedicated State Board and a thorough understanding of the need to develop and maintain good working relationships with local schools, the legislature, and the state administration. I believe I am this kind of leader.

Today, across Ohio, schools are preparing to register kindergarteners for the class of 2035. The decisions that the State Board and the Department make during those intervening years must focus exclusively on providing those and all other Ohio children the best educational opportunities, and the safest and most wholesome learning atmosphere possible, and I would like to help you lead Ohio's educators in achieving those goals. As your state superintendent, I promise to advocate on behalf of all children and to work tirelessly to build relationships, solve problems, and collaborate to ensure all Ohio's children can achieve their greatest potential.

2. What is your greatest accomplishment to date in education?

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There is no doubt that, as a teacher and coach, my greatest accomplishments have been to see those students who I have served develop into outstanding young men and women. To continue to be part of their lives long after our last class together is a rewarding experience second to none. When one of my former runners, who are, sadly, middle-aged men now, greet me with, “Hey Coach,” a sense of pride washes over me.

For this response, however, I will focus on my tenure as a superintendent.

I have been fortunate to develop a culture, in the two school districts where I have served as a superintendent, in which we restored the trust and confidence in the schools of their respective communities. Serving as a superintendent for 22 years in two different states has provided me with the experience of making decisions, building teams, and implementing programs with the ability to see those actions all the way through. Too often, superintendents serve 4 or 5 years and then move on or retire before ever seeing the results of their work or having to make course corrections. Because I have had these experiences, I have the privilege of being a leader who has benefited from witnessing the impact of those decisions. Communicating in a humble, honest, and transparent way to all stakeholders while dealing with, “the good, the bad, and the ugly” restored the trust and confidence in the schools.

In Perrysburg, since being hired in 2007, the district has passed 8 consecutive school levies. In the 15 years prior to my arrival, Perrysburg Schools failed 7 levies while passing just 6. At Huron Schools in Michigan, we saw the success of passing the district’s first bond issue in over 24 years.

The greatest accomplishment is that this success is not due to one person but to a culture where we worked together every day on doing what is best for students. The community saw these changes and supported the schools in so many ways in addition to passing levies and bond issues. For example, in Perrysburg, we created the position of development director, one of the first of its type in the state, and have now raised over \$6 million in private funds to support our students and teachers. Perrysburg has become a destination district for families and businesses who trust and have confidence in our ability to serve students and meet their needs.

3. Please share your relevant experience for the position of State Superintendent. Specifically, please detail your experience as a superintendent in Ohio public schools.

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to be entrusted to lead and represent the voices of many diverse educational institutions. From serving on the Toledo Catholic Diocese Bishop’s Educational Oversight Committee, to being the Chair of Ohio’s Alliance of High-Quality Schools representing 70 of Ohio’s highest performing districts, to serving as President of the Tri-County Alliance in Michigan, which represents more than 80 school districts in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties, including Detroit Public Schools. The Tri-County Alliance’s member districts accounted for more than 46% of all the students in Michigan. In Northwest Ohio, my colleagues and I formed CAPE NWO: Coalition of Advocates for PK-16 Education, with the mission of providing a collective voice focused on positive direction, and promoting quality education for all students, PK-16, in Northwest Ohio. I was honored to be elected this group’s first president, serving for 5 years. The coalition carries out its mission by collaborating with decision-makers and key stakeholders. It represents Career Tech, ESCs, and local school districts from 11 NWO

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counties. It also includes the Colleges of Education at Bowling Green State University and the University of Toledo.

In 2014, following an issue at the Ohio Department of Education involving state report cards for community schools, I was the only superintendent appointed to the Charter School Sponsor Review Committee of three, where we developed new standards for community school sponsors.

Most recently, I had the honor of serving as co-chair of the base costs of the Fair School Funding Plan by Speaker Cupp and former Representative Patterson. I have spent more than four years developing the plan and serving as base cost co-chair with Ryan Pendleton, Treasurer of Akron Public Schools, as the lead spokesmen. We've presented the concepts and plans across the state, collaborated with legislative and union leaders, responded to media inquiries, and testified countless times. Ryan and I had the privilege of presenting before the State Board of Education on January 15, 2019. This effort led to the creation of a new state funding model based on the needs of students. The base cost component that I helped lead was adopted in total in the last biennium budget.

Ohio has a rocky history when it comes to state funding, from the DeRolph rulings to several failed attempts over the last few decades to adopt a new funding model that would correct the broken one that has plagued Ohio for generations. During our efforts, we were told repeatedly that this plan was "dead on arrival." Working hard, recalibrating, focusing on what was best for students, listening, and building coalitions across the state helped contribute to the Fair School Funding Plan's passage. This and my other leadership experiences have taught me a great deal. When we as a state focus on doing what is best for all students, put committed people in the right places, devise a plan to accomplish that goal, and take the steps necessary to make that happen, we can overcome challenges that some may proclaim are impossible.

4. What are your thoughts on the structure of remote work? Is it a successful model?

It seems in the business world, the structure of remote work has been somewhat successful given that many companies have opted to keep staff remote well beyond when restrictions were lifted. I cannot speak to those decisions. When Governor DeWine closed all school buildings in Ohio in March 2020, schools across Ohio were forced to adjust. Perrysburg Schools adhered to the lockdown and only those "essential" employees reported, and the rest worked remotely.

With the pandemic, remote work became a necessity for schools in March 2020. In Perrysburg, the team did an excellent job of adjusting and keeping the focus on meeting the needs of all students. Remote work and learning were not ideal, but it worked well enough during the lockdown. As our staff members worked hard to return to face-to-face instruction, most positions could not be done remotely. For those few positions that were done remotely during this transition period, it proved to be challenging. The culture in those offices changed because of how dependent our operations were on working together and being able to support instruction and serve families. We made the decision to return all staff members.

At the board level, it was permissible to continue to hold meetings remotely while the teachers, staff members and students were in a face-to-face environment. The optics of the board being remote while the rest of the district returned did not sit well with most members. The board

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voted to return to face-to-face meetings. When those who we serve are working in a face-to-face environment, it is difficult to justify those who support their work not returning in-person, especially if it is impacting the culture of the organization.

5. What do you see as your commitments level of your personal investment in this position?

In the fifteen years that I have been superintendent at Perrysburg Schools, there have been 8 state superintendents including the interim superintendents. The decision to leave an outstanding district like Perrysburg, the security of a multiyear contract, and a supportive board of education to step into the state superintendency is one that I took a great deal of time reflecting upon and discussing with my family and closest friends before applying.

The decision to apply for this position, the only position that I have applied for since becoming superintendent at Perrysburg Schools over 15 years ago, has been one of the most difficult of my professional career. But today, across Ohio, schools are preparing to register kindergarteners for the class of 2035. We know students are hurting as we emerge from the pandemic. The decisions that the State Board and the Department make during these intervening years must focus exclusively on providing those and all other Ohio children the best educational opportunities, and the safest and most wholesome learning atmosphere possible, and I would like to help you lead Ohio's educators in achieving those goals. As your state superintendent, I promise to advocate on the behalf of all children and to work tirelessly to build relationships, solve problems, and collaborate to ensure all Ohio's children can achieve their greatest potential.

I may not be the "typical" candidate for state superintendent. I am a practicing superintendent who this week was speaking with students, their families and teachers about issues that matter to them most. I am not retired, in fact with my past experiences in Catholic schools and working in Michigan, I am not sure when or if I can ever retire. While I have proven to be an effective advocate for my students, students across the state and a frequent visitor to the legislature, I do not put politics first. I am not part of a policy think tank or a consultant. I am from Northwest Ohio, not Columbus, Cleveland, or Cincinnati. I make decisions about reading programs, staffing, budgets, and return calls to parents who are unhappy about not having snow days.

In terms of my personal investment, if given the opportunity, I will be fully committed to the position. I hope the board will be as committed to me as I am willing to serve it.

Accountability / Fiscal Responsibility

6. Ninety percent of young people in Ohio attend public schools; however, traditional public schools are continuously underfunded and educators do not receive appreciation they deserve. As the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, how would you address these issues?

Let me begin by saying this question is one that local superintendents wrestle with every day. There is no short or easy answer. I can say that as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I will do what I have done as a local superintendent – lead.

Serving as co-chair for base costs of the Fair School Funding Plan, I answered the call to address the issue of school funding. When it comes to doing what is right for students, leaders must find their voice. We were brought together at the Riffe Center on November 15, 2017, to answer the question, "What do Ohio's school-aged youths need in order to acquire a high-quality

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education?” From that moment, we created a fair funding plan with input from legislators, experts, educators, and anyone who was willing to provide commentary. During this process, we focused on creating a formula without knowing the impact it would have on any of our personal districts. That was scary. We trusted the process, made the best decisions for all Ohio students, and pushed the button to calculate the formula. Once fully phased in, there will be no more guarantees or caps.

Ohio’s past school funding formula was broken. In the previous biennium budget, 100% of the districts in Ohio were not on the formula. Prior budgets resulted in districts on the guarantee, the formula, or the cap. At the end of the current biennium budget, there is no guarantee that the current formula will remain in place. As the State Superintendent, with the board’s support, I would advocate for a funding model that would be fair to all of Ohio’s students.

As the state superintendent, it would be important to use the platform provided to promote and praise teachers and school staff members. We are seeing a steady decrease of candidates entering the field of education. In our words and deeds, we must stop undermining the professional educator. It must become a priority to improve the perception of the teaching profession in Ohio and work with local districts to improve the culture around the profession by its current education professionals. It would be a priority to work with partners to better recruit, reward, and retain teachers. I would also work with the deans from the colleges of education to identify ways to support emerging teachers and show value, such as looking for grants to offset testing costs.

7. What number of employees will you need at the department to carry out the duties required by law?

I am sorry but I do not have an answer to this question. I have reviewed the sections of the Ohio Revised Code and then considered federal law and various requirements. In addition, there are federal grants that require specific things from the department. All of these require staffing to complete.

The “Each Child, Our Future” Strategic Plan for Education 2019-2024 lays out an aggressive and bold plan for the department and Ohio. With approximately 650 employees in the department, it would be critical to have enough staff to support the adopted vision and mission of the department, which is aspirational and not tied to the Ohio Revised Code or federal laws or grants. Additionally, we have learned through the pandemic, circumstances change for the districts, schools, and students we serve, and sometimes staffing is needed to accommodate this reality.

In reflecting on this question, I thought about it from the local perspective. The same could be asked of me as the superintendent of Perrysburg Schools. The Ohio Revised Code’s basic requirements for education are minimal. Bussing for high school students, drama and athletics, AP courses, nurses, advanced courses, and many of the supports for students who do not qualify for IEP or 504 services are not required. I do not believe there is a school district in Ohio that only provides the ORC minimums.

Looking at the question through a rhetorical lens, the department, like districts, must ask the question: “What is it that we must provide and what should we provide to make a difference in

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the lives of our students and prepare them for their futures?” “Weeding the garden” is a critical step for any new administration. Evaluating what we are doing and asking the tough question of “Is it making a difference?” must be applied to every non-required program. In education, there is a tendency to adopt new programs but there is often an unwillingness to let things go. In the end, what services do stakeholders need and what role does the department want to take in shaping the direction of the future for our state’s children?

Innovation

8. According to reports from educators, parents, social workers, students and others, more and more youth are experiencing mental health issues. Do you have a plan for addressing this whole child barrier on a statewide level?

This is one of the most pressing issues facing educators and families. There is no doubt, our kids are hurting. This impacts performance and may create a barrier to becoming career and college ready. This will hurt our communities and state for generations to come. We first need to acknowledge that this is not an isolated school issue but one that must be tackled by the entire community and state. School leaders must also acknowledge that the current structure in place to support the mental health issues in our schools is not equipped to support the need at this time.

To address this whole child barrier, we need to think and approach the issue decisively and bring community providers and schools together. Schools have access to their students at least 180 days a year. Additional funding for this work should flow through the providers and schools must have a voice in how to best structure those services during the school day and with its students. Funds may need to be provided to schools in dealing with temporary operational costs, if incurred.

As the state superintendent, it would be important to lead the conversation by assembling mental health experts and school leaders representing a range of districts, including rural and urban. There are very different challenges in delivering services depending on the district. Wrap-around services for students will require these partnerships. While bringing these key stakeholders to the table, it would be necessary to work with the Governor’s office and legislature on solutions.

Vision

9. What do you believe is the most pressing issue in education today?

Today, I would argue that there are more barriers to learning for students than I have seen in my career. Mental health needs for students and families tops this list and creates significant challenges to the learning process. Mental health issues impact each child and our future by creating a barrier in the four equal learning domains in the “Each Child, Our Future” Strategic Plan for Education 2019-2024.

10. What challenges do you see to the future of social studies education?

I believe the challenges facing the future of social studies education will be the attempt to politicize the learning standards by either end of the political spectrum. The Ohio K-12 Social Studies standards adopted by the Ohio Department of Education were last updated in 2018 and all of Ohio’s Learning Standards may be easily reviewed by the public and may be accessed on the Ohio Department of Education’s website under the section titled, “Ohio’s Learning

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Standards.” There has been a great deal of transparency by the department in its creation and adoption of those learning standards.

11. What are your 2022-2025 priorities for the department?

My priorities as state superintendent for the department during the period 2022 through 2025 would be to continue to implement, support, and refine the Each Child, Our Future strategic plan for education 2019-2024. Next year, I would lead a discussion with the Board as to the next steps as the current strategic plan would be set to expire. While this work is taking place, I would ensure the following components of the plan would be ongoing:

- Seek to make and maintain meaningful and timely relationships with the House and Senate to support all of Ohio’s students.
- Ensure all Ohio public school students have access to a high-quality educational opportunity and to ensure all students achieve their greatest potential.
- Provide collaborative leadership in the execution of the strategic plan, co-developed with members of the State Board, to ensure a quality educational opportunity for all Ohio public school students.
- Create a culture that values teachers and staff members and addresses the impending teacher shortage.
- Inspire all department employees to a high level of efficiency, loyalty and commitment in the pursuit of their assigned responsibilities.
- Promote career-connected curriculums through partnerships with the business community.
- Maintain effective communication and productive working relationships with the Administration and members of the Ohio General Assembly.
- Provide school districts with prompt, consistent and decisive responses and service. Earn and maintain respect and support for public education from members of the General Assembly, families, the media, and the public at large.
- Seek to make and maintain meaningful and timely relationships with the House and Senate to support all of Ohio’s students.

12. Can you provide some thought and insight on your filling of the vacant Deputy Superintendent's position? What skill sets would you be looking for in that person to supplement your skill sets as Superintendent?

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to have been able to select and to work with amazing assistant superintendents. In selecting these individuals, I have always looked for a person to complement my skill set and leadership style, while being ambitious and desiring to one day become a superintendent. Filling the Deputy Superintendent’s position would follow this same successful practice. I would seek a strong leader who can follow through on initiatives to keep those rolling and successful while keeping my ability to focus on building relationships. Together, we would work on eliminating the silos that have been built within the department and between key stakeholder groups. It would be imperative that we move quickly to get things done and be decisive.

We have seen the very best and worst in the last 18 months in our schools. The department has been accused of being impersonal in some respects despite the efforts of many talented and hard working staff members. Those who call on the department are looking for a partner or a support. The Deputy Superintendent would be my ally in regaining the trust of the field.

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Together, we would be able to bring together diverse perspectives to help close the chasms between the department, field, and statehouse.

13. What is your plan for changing focus of the department to support success for our students on basic education?

In the *Each Child, Our Future* strategic plan for education 2019-2024, the “Foundational Knowledge & Skills: literacy, numeracy and technology” identifies that Ohio’s economy is changing and students must be equipped with foundational knowledge and skills... Each child must know how to critically read, write, work with numbers and leverage technology...” Throughout the plan there are specific strategies that point towards the important task of supporting each student, including those on a basic education track. Specifically, Strategy 10, “Ensure high school inspires students to identify paths to future success, and give students multiple ways to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for high school and beyond,” is one way the department can support success in basic education. Connecting students with career-focused curriculum and illuminating a path towards success will provide relevance to their educational journey.

14. Of the three Core Principles and four Learning Domains of the strategic plan, which one item is your priority? Do you support this strategic plan?

The *Each Child, Our Future* strategic plan for education 2019-2024 is an excellent road map for the state and local districts to follow and I support the plan. When I review the strategic plan, it reminds me of a recipe. Like a recipe, if an ingredient is left out or doubled (with the exception of chocolate chips in cookies), there is a very good chance that the final product will not be successful. One item in the recipe cannot take priority over the other. The longer a baker uses the recipe and becomes familiar with the ingredients, it is possible to make slight changes, to make the final product exactly the way the baker intends. In time, adding a new ingredient, a pinch, or a dash can add flavor and variety. But an experienced baker knows the limits.

The three core principles and four learning domains of the strategic plan are the main ingredients called for in the recipe. The strategic plan refers to these as being either “core” or “equal.” I would not be comfortable identifying one item as a priority as it may ruin the recipe.

It states, “all schools, public and private, play important roles in building Ohio’s future.” The three core principles, equity, partnership, and quality schools are each essential ingredients.

15. What is your familiarity with the Whole Child Framework? What critiques and recommendations would you provide?

I have been very familiar with the Whole Child Framework as described in the *Each Child, Our Future* strategic plan 2019-2024. It states, “The time a child spends in school is precious and should ensure all aspects of a child’s well-being are addressed including the physical, social, emotional and intellectual aspects.” Additionally, the strategic plan states, “Whole child is defined by actions taken to ensure that each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged. This definition is adapted from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.”

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During the numerous occasions that I testified in the House and Senate and presented the Fair School Funding Plan across the state, I stated, “The Fair School Funding Plan funds students where they need it most through a meticulously constructed base cost and provides other funding components to support Ohio’s youth in a variety of important ways. This comprehensive plan starts with the moment students are picked up at the crack of dawn until they log off their school computer that night. Everything educationally that occurs between those two events has been considered. The Fair School Funding Plan is based on and around Ohio’s students.”

It was very exciting to see the work of the State Board of Education and the department and then see a school funding formula that aligned so closely. It was not a coincidence, having been a participant in the strategic planning process like so many other Ohioans, this approach of considering the whole child in all ways is the best path forward for our future.

My recommendation would be that the Whole Child Framework and the Each Child, Our Future strategic plan 2019-2024 should become the primary driver in all that the department does. How many board discussions are deliberately geared towards the Each Child, Our Future strategic plan and Whole Child Framework? As the new state superintendent I would approach this work with fidelity and a sense of urgency.

Servant Leadership

16. Who do you view as the primary consumer of our education system, parents or children?

I have always approached the answer to this question with an “and” and not an “or.” It is both students *and* parents/guardians/families. This response, I believe, is aligned with the Each Child, Our Future strategic plan 2019-2024.

Parents, families, and caregivers are typically our student’s first and certainly most important teachers. In education, we desperately need our families engaged in all aspects of the learning process to be successful. Teachers and staff members do not know their students as well as families do and likewise not all families have that experience of what it is like to educate their child. Without both teachers and families at the table, there is a major ingredient missing.

Educational leaders must be thoughtful about how to connect with all families. Not every family can participate as much as they would like, such as attending board meetings or school events. Their voices as consumers are important and it is vital that we work to capture it.

I would be remiss in not recognizing those residents who do not have children as consumers. Oxford Languages defines consumer as “a person who purchases goods and services for personal use.” In this case, the purchase that is being made by these residents is a product that will impact the value of their home or property by “purchasing” a strong educational system.

Today, we serve a wide variety of families who sometimes share very different beliefs and values. Families who love and support their children equally may be on opposite ends of this spectrum. It is important that all voices be heard, but which voices do teachers and school leaders listen to? As a result, local school boards serve as the voice of the collective community and, in conjunction with the department and state board of education, make final decisions.

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17. Do you believe the voices of students are important in decisions that will have a direct impact on them? If so, what will that look like, if you become the State Superintendent of Public Instruction? If not, why not?

I believe very strongly that the voices of students are important in decisions that will have a direct impact on their lives. The further one moves away from the classroom in the world of education, the harder it is to make meaningful connections with students. The state superintendent and board of education is far removed from classrooms.

If I become the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I would suggest that throughout the year, the state board holds one or two of its meetings in local districts across the state if possible. By doing this, the state board and department leaders would be closer to those who it serves. On the agenda, we could feature a student component or a presentation by the host school. In each of the eleven state board seats, I would propose holding a student advisory meeting for any board member who resides in that area. Each board meeting could feature a report on what the students shared.

As a local superintendent, I have taken steps to connect with students in ways that go beyond being the guy in a suit in the back of the room. Currently, I am the advisor of the Perrysburg High School Philanthropy Club, which I began five years ago. Throughout the year, I facilitate as students identify a need and then work with them on fundraising for that purpose. I schedule guest speakers on topics the students select and we meet with prospects who may be interested in donating to their cause.

At Huron Schools, I had a superintendent's advisory committee that met monthly. We also began one of the state's first volunteer programs at the high school, where students left for part of the school day each week in a semester to serve at such places as a family shelter or a Detroit elementary school. I often joined them in their service.

Five years ago in Perrysburg, a small group of students came to me with an idea— a desire to encourage their peers to give back to their community in a meaningful way and on a large scale. Hearing their desire to give back and affect positive change, I began the "Jackets Giving Back" day. Jackets Giving Back is an annual day of community service in which every senior signs up to volunteer at one of dozens of locations across northwest Ohio. I have cherished working side-by-side with those students each year at one of the locations, "Tent City." For the past six years, I have served as the bookkeeper at the scorer's table for the freshman basketball team. These are just a few of the ways I connect with students over and above attending the many functions of our school district.

By establishing standing meetings across the state designed for listening to students, it would be critical to take various department leaders into the field.

Collaboration and Facilitation

18. Please tell us about your experience working with unions, negotiating collective bargaining agreements, and working through performance issues within a unionized environment.
- For twenty-two years, I have served as the chief negotiator for the school boards I have served. I have participated in both traditional bargaining and interest-based bargaining. In Michigan, I worked with the Teamsters, Michigan Education Association, and a unionized administrative team.

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In Ohio, I have worked with the Ohio Education Association and the Ohio Association of Public School Employees. Over the years, I have fostered very strong relationships with the unions.

An example of this positive relationship was demonstrated in utilizing a Race to the Top Grant, where the district worked with area business partners and union leaders to develop a performance-based pay option for teachers. This was a revolutionary idea, and the union, which participated in the development of the plan, agreed to offer it as an option for its members. Approximately 46% of the teachers elected to leave the traditional salary schedule and move to the performance-based pay salary schedule where increases and advancement were tied to performance.

I have had experiences with underperforming staff in both unionized and non-union settings. It is important that the staff member be given clear expectations, coaching, and the ability to improve. If that does not happen, steps must be taken to address it, which may include termination or resignation. These are tough conversations that often lead to life-changing events. However, when these conversations happen, we have exhausted all other opportunities and there is no choice. We owe it to our students to ensure that we have the right people in the right positions and when that doesn't happen, we have failed.

19. How do you plan to engage the educational process in rural southern Ohio?

Just last month I was in Chauncey, Ohio at the Athens Meigs ESC as part of the Fair School Funding Plan listening tour. In the last two years, this was my third trip to the region to engage with superintendents and treasurers. This most recent trip, my colleague on the workgroup and I presented to treasurers and superintendents in this region. More importantly, we listened to their concerns and comments. Working closely with members of the workgroup from that region has taught me so much about their community and the work they do. While I served as a principal in a rural Michigan community, I learned there are different challenges. It was clear that the educational community appreciated us traveling there and offering a forum.

As the state superintendent, I would request to be added to the agenda of CORAS (Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools) that represents 110 school districts in 32 counties. I would commit to investing my time and the time of key staff members from the department. We must be prepared to do more than listen. It will be important that they recognize that their voices will be more than heard, but that those interactions will result in action. The more the department can really understand, the more we can help and support in a meaningful way.

I would like to add that in preparation for applying for this position and then again after I was invited to interview, I reached out to members of the Ohio 8 Coalition, representing urban schools and their organization's leadership to listen to their feedback on the department. I am grateful for their sharing their perspective and most importantly ideas on how we can work together as an entire educational community and how the department can better meet their needs.

My leadership style is very inclusive and collaborative. While preparing for this interview, I also organized a call with the deans from the colleges of education of seven of Ohio's universities. Also, I met with the President of the Senate, the Chairs of the House and Senate Education Committee as well as other former and current state officials. I believe that the "room is smarter than the person" and fostering deep relationships is critical to the success of the next state superintendent.

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