

I was energized by Governor Strickland's education proposals that he made last week. Like many people, I have questions about the details, but it was refreshing to see so much focus on education and student success. I was also pleased to hear the governor speak of "not tinkering" with a centuries-old educational system but instead re-inventing it for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The governor made many proposals. I'd like to comment on some that I think are among the most important:

All-day kindergarten – It is the right thing to do from an academic perspective. But there are challenges. At our kindergarten center students currently attend only a half-day, so one teacher and one classroom can handle both the morning and afternoon sessions. If kindergarten is a full day, we'll need more teachers and classrooms. We'll also have to add the ability to serve lunch. One thought is to relocate the kindergartens to our five neighborhood elementary schools, but there are space limitations in several of those as well.

Lengthening the school year to 200 days – Again, it's the right thing to do for student learning. My concern is the heat. We already manage our calendar closely to try and avoid the worst of August and June heat. Adding 20 more days to the school year has to stretch into one or the other, or both. A second- or third-floor classroom in a school without air conditioning, in heat approaching 100 degrees, can reach the point where maintaining a productive learning environment is very hard to do.

Eliminating the Ohio Graduation Test – The governor proposed replacing the OGT with the ACT exam. I support this. It raises the bar academically. The ACT is a college entrance exam and is generally considered more rigorous.

Including service learning in the curriculum – Service learning has been defined as "integrating meaningful community service with classroom instruction to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." I know that not everybody supports this approach. Some people feel we should stick to the traditional classroom and traditional subjects. But I believe service learning allows our students to see human life from another vantage point, and it's an opportunity some of them may not have anywhere else.

Individualized learning – I was pleased to see the governor include this. As a product of our own student success initiative, we are looking at creating an individual learning plan for each child. We don't have it all worked out yet, but one idea is to base it on what's known as the "40 developmental assets," a highly regarded framework developed by the Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)) that represents experiences and traits that young people need. Building around these would allow us to partner better with parents, because instilling some of these traits is the proper role of parents, not schools.

Improve school funding – I was thrilled to hear that the funding system will be re-worked to eliminate phantom revenue and for the state to assume a greater share of funding. This

is exactly what I was hoping for. We'll be following this closely to see how it develops and will be working with our own state legislators to offer our input.

*Published in the Fairfield Echo, Feb. 5, 2009.*