Stark County schools call for state to hold report card scores

By CHELSEA SHAROHR @the-review Published: February 24, 2016 3:00 AM

The state Department of Education released state report card scores to district superintendents on Tuesday, two days before they will be made public, and the Stark County Educational Service Center (ESC), spoke out about their disapproval of the scores and their release to the public.

"We agreed that the data in this report card released is flawed and does not accurately achieve and reflect the growth of the students in the 22 local school districts we represent. We are hopeful the Ohio Department of Education will not publish this report card on Thursday," said Stark County ESC Superintendent Joe Chaddock. The Stark County ESC represents 22 schools in Stark County, including Alliance City Schools and Marlington Local Schools.

The PARCC test was administered from 2014 to 2015, the years the test results being released on Thursday are reporting on. The state has since discontinued using the test because of widespread disapproval about the frequency, length and rigor of the test.

Due to the state as a whole doing poorly on the test, the state has also announced the school districts will not be held responsible for the results released this year. Chaddock said he has expressed the schools’ concerns to state legislators but has not heard anything and didn’t want to focus on what the state has done wrong.

"We're not whining. We want to be held accountable and we want to be treated fairly, and we think that this report card doesn't accurately reflect the great things going on in our schools," Chaddock said during a press conference Tuesday.

With three different tests administered to students over three years, the lack of an established standard makes analyzing the scores nearly impossible, the board said.

"Completely flawed data doesn't help us when it comes to public opinion of our schools," said ESC Assistant Superintendent Marty Bowe. "There is an entity that deserves an F, but it's not our school districts."

The board said its calling for one thing from the state education department -- more local control.

Alliance City Schools Superintendent Jeffery Talbert was one of the superintendents present at the press conference Tuesday.

"We're talking about individual students, not widgets. To ask every student, regardless of where they started on this journey, to be in the same place at the same time is ridiculous," Talbert said.

He added that the district isn't afraid of accountability, but a one-size-fits-all system is the wrong way to go to keep districts accountable.

"It's a big issue, and I think we get lost in this accountability and this era that we're in, and we lose that we are talking about children," Talbert said.

Stark County ESC administrators also shared the successes their data showed over the last few years.

For instance, Alliance City Schools decreased the number of students who have to take math remediation classes once they got to college by 16 percent from 2013 to 2014.

The total increase in students and courses involved in the College Credit opportunities in Stark County more than doubled in the past seven years, saving Stark County students millions of dollars in college textbook and tuition fees.

More than 97 percent of Stark County students met the threshold to pass the reading guarantee in the third grade, yet the state test results show no school district in the county scored above a C in K-3 literacy -- an example of the discrepancies in the state report card scores and actual student success.

Chaddock also explained that college readiness, career readiness and military readiness are the three goals for each graduate, which are not reflected in the report card scores.

Stark Education Partnership President Teresa Purses also spoke to the press Tuesday and said in her visits to schools across Stark County she sees teachers and administrators are helping students to learn in far more ways than what the report cards show, such as by helping to provide food, clothing and emotional resources so that students can be ready to learn.

She echoed the theme that the state report card results don't accurately show student achievement and parents and community members should look at other standards instead, such as ACT scores and graduation rates.

"We believe when you look not just at all students but drill down and at each student group you are going to find folks in this room are closing that achievement gap... and sometimes that story doesn't get told," she said.

School districts all have their own assessments, which Purses said can be more useful to parents to see student achievement. Alliance, for example uses iReady to test student achievement and progress throughout the year.

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