

**Response to 2015-16 Ohio Report Card**  
**Mark A. Murphy, Superintendent, Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools**

The Ohio Department of Education plans to release the 2016 Report Card for all Ohio school districts on September 15. The report represents a multitude of measurement components, including achievement, progress, gap closing, graduation rate, and others.

Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools fully supports high educational standards, quality measurement systems, and accountability to our local community; it's what our students deserve and residents expect. The challenge, however, is keeping up with Ohio's accountability system described by the Department of Education as "in transition." Those in the field would more aptly describe the state's measurement system as a running target, the complete opposite of sound educational practice and what is good for students.

Before ODE releases report card results, it is imperative for residents and community leaders to understand the massive changes in the state's accountability system in order to keep a healthy perspective on the district report card.

Educators and community members of Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools will likely gasp and struggle to comprehend how a strong performing school district, rated with an "A" just six months ago, could somehow plummet to a "D" a few short months later. Did our students suddenly become less intelligent? Did the quality of our teacher instruction abruptly plunge? Have administrators lost their focus on what matters most? Quite the contrary.

Four major factors have specifically contributed to the reason most school districts will likely see a drastic drop in local report card ratings for 2016, including ours.

Online assessments. The previous pencil/paper testing format in Ohio has been replaced with online assessments. While districts were initially given the option to choose online or paper/pencil format, most made the necessary technological upgrades to successfully administer the state's required tests online. As an example, Ohio's third graders are expected to read an extended passage on a computer or Chromebook, and then type a three paragraph essay in response to what they have read. Most adults today learned keyboarding in high school, whereas today's children are required to learn keyboarding skills beginning in kindergarten. You can be proud that TV students exceeded the state's 3rd grade reading benchmark.

Three tests in three years. Ohio's students have been subject to three different tests in three years. Previously, all students in grades 3-8 took the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) in Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Ohio then moved away from the OAA to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) for the 2014-2015 school year. Most recently, PARCC was disbanded and replaced by American Institutes of Research (AIR) for 2015-2016. Expecting students to navigate three different types of tests in three years on the same learning standards is like having an official change the worth of a football touchdown in the middle of a game, a decision resulting in immediate frustration for players and spectators alike.

Increased cut scores. Individual students must earn a certain cut score on the state assessment to be considered proficient in each tested area (ex: 6th grade math). In 17 of 31 tested areas, the individual cut score required for students to achieve at the proficient level increased from the 14-15 school year to the 15-16 school year. For instance, a 6th grade student in 2016 needed to score 70% higher on the Math AIR assessment than a student taking the Math PARCC assessment in 2015. Our district is pleased the state expects individual students to reach higher levels to be considered proficient, and our students met the challenge.

Increased percentages. In order for a district to “meet” the state indicator for a particular grade and content area (ex. 6th grade social studies), the state requires a certain total percentage of students to score proficient or higher in that tested grade and subject. The state increased percentages in 22 of 27 tested areas from the 14-15 school year to 15-16 school year. In other words, 21% more 6th grade students were required to score proficient on the social studies assessment in 2016 for the district to meet the indicator. Tusky Valley applauds increased expectations to earn the “met” indicator, and TV students exceeded the state standard for 6th grade social studies. We question, however, the 21% arbitrary increase expected in one year.

Our school district finds solid merit in each of the changes of the measurement system outlined above, especially if each were properly and individually implemented. The running target of implementing them all at one time leads to skewed results and misrepresentation of the real learning and achievement of our students and real progress of our schools.

I encourage our teachers and residents to not become alarmed or discouraged, or to think that your local public schools are suddenly failing. I especially do not want our students to question their potential or believe they are incapable of achieving and excelling on state required assessments. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our students’ performance is strong on all fronts, including academics, athletics, and the arts. Our district’s students are kind, respectful, hardworking, and responsible. They want to do well and they are quick to serve. Teachers and administrators care deeply, hold high expectations for academic performance and behavior, and work diligently to help each student develop to his/her greatest potential.

We will obviously continue to pay close attention to the state’s report card; it is how we are measured and held accountable. We’re okay with that, and we’re thankful for the growth shown on our district report card.

Our greatest focus will continue to be our students, educating, equipping, guiding, and expecting them to become all that they can be.

For All TV Children,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Mark A. Murphy

Superintendent  
Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools