



School Districts of Innovation

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023

Executive Summary

[Ohio law](#) permits the designation of an individual school operated by a school district as an innovation school or two or more schools in the district as an innovation zone. School districts of innovation may seek waivers from certain education laws or administrative rules to implement an innovative educational program.

- Only one district applied for and received a waiver this year.
- This was the first time a waiver was granted under this law.
- Statutory changes to modernize the “blizzard bag” law may be necessary to foster innovation and address school needs.

Annual Report Requirements

In accordance with [Ohio Revised Code section 3302.068](#), the Department of Education must issue an annual report on school districts of innovation detailing:

- The number of districts designated as school districts of innovation and the total number of school districts of innovation statewide;
- The number of innovation schools in each school district of innovation and the number of students served by the schools;
- The number of innovation school zones in each school district of innovation, the number of schools participating in each zone and the number of students served by the participating schools;
- The innovations implemented in innovation schools and innovation school zones; and
- The academic performance of the students enrolled in an innovation school or an innovation school zone before and after the designation as a school district of innovation.

2022-2023 School Year

In February 2023, the State Board of Education [approved](#) Noble Local School District’s [application](#) to become a school district of innovation. The two schools in the district, Shenandoah High School and Shenandoah Elementary School, will implement online classroom lessons when the district is closed for calamities, generally waiving certain requirements of [Ohio Revised Code section 3313.482](#) (colloquially referred to as the “Blizzard Bag Statute”). All 973 students in the Noble Local School District are served by Shenandoah High School and Shenandoah Elementary School, which amounts to 100% of the district’s total population.

This is the first innovation zone designation granted by the State Board of Education since the



statute went into effect in 2011. As such, the Department will not have data regarding academic performance or the effectiveness of this innovation until fall 2023 when the data reporting window for the Education Management Information System (EMIS) closes.

Legislative Recommendations

Many schools moved to the use of online instructional methods during the COVID pandemic when schools were closed. Schools have continued to use these instructional methods for certain students and courses even after schools reopened. As such, online instruction may no longer be considered an innovative educational practice so much as a necessary one.

The Department recommends revisions to Ohio Revised Code section 3313.482 to allow public and chartered nonpublic schools to use online instruction when schools are closed for calamities, such as inclement weather, inoperability of school buses or malfunctioning school equipment. These changes would ensure continuity of learning for students during school closures by engaging them in teacher-directed synchronous instruction. The Department recommends allowing schools to make up hours up to the equivalent of three school days through online instruction. These revisions would enable all districts and schools to use online instruction during school closures without the need for a waiver.