

Work group mulls DOR school subcategories

Members of a work group created through charter school “reform” legislation (H.B. 2) passed in 2015 are considering whether the dropout recovery (DOR) school designation is too broad for the 87 diverse schools.

“We have a really, really broad definition of what dropout prevention and recovery is,” said Ohio Department of Education’s Innovation Director Buddy Harris, who serves as the work group’s leader. “Is our definition that speaks to 16-22 year olds that have dropped out or are at severe risk of dropping out ... adequate for us to really build a continuous improvement system on?”

“If you think about it, we have conversion, we have startup, brick and mortar, virtual, only high school, K-12 – lots of different types of schools yet they all fit under this one umbrella,” he continued.

The work group is tasked with defining “quality” for charter dropout recovery schools and studying the efficacy of a completion or competency-based funding structure for the unique schools.

“I don’t know how you can possibly be setting standards without a better, more narrow focus of what type of school you’re looking at,” said Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering), who chairs the Senate Education Committee, sponsored H.B. 2, and serves as a member of the work group. “There is nothing that says you can’t have a common definition, but within that we may need to be looking at different types of schools.”

Key stakeholders – superintendents serving on the work group, and DOR school leaders attending the work group’s meetings – share a common concern about judging schools based on four-year graduation rates without taking into consideration the fact that many serve students who must recover a significant number of credits.