Mayor speaks to CEA Legislative Assembly

On Thursday, Mar. 7, Mayor Michael Coleman spoke candidly and at length about the role of the Columbus Education Commission, as well as his vision for the future of Columbus City Schools.

In the 14 years that he’s been in office, Mayor Coleman has always participated in the Columbus education arena, though until now, his involvement has been on the periphery. Coleman told FRs point blank—he doesn’t want to take over the district, nor does he want to go after our collective bargaining rights. The Mayor believes in collective bargaining and was the first public official to come out against Senate Bill 5. He did acknowledge that, as a school district, we face serious challenges.

Eric Fingerhut, Executive Director of the mayor’s commission, outlined the serious challenges facing CCS. The State Auditor’s ongoing investigation of data scrubbing may result in revisions to the district’s recently released state report card. These revisions may plunge the district into “Academic Distress,” which would trigger a takeover of CCS by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). A five-member panel would be put in place by ODE, effectively ending “local control” of the district. Fingerhut noted that the Cleveland Municipal School District may be able to avoid state control due to the changes district. Fingerhut noted that the Cleveland Municipal School District may be able to avoid state control due to the changes that already have been made through its academic plan.

Coleman and Fingerhut spent nearly thirty minutes answering multiple questions from the Faculty Representatives present.

“There is no magic formula,” said Mayor Coleman in his closing remarks, “nor is there an easy answer. However, it’s time to bring help to the community from the community.”

Chop the school day? Harris says “no”

After much hoopla and a continuing understanding of what Gov. Kasich proposes to offer schools next year, Supt. Gene Harris is recommending that we retain the eight-period day in middle and high schools. We thank her because these types of cuts would devastate the academic program, especially the middle school unified arts program and high school electives. Experts in medicine, psychology and education concur: Physical activity and participation in the arts improves academic performance.

We realize this means that changes are coming to the Article 211 calendar. Human Resources will not be able to post positions by the contractual deadline of the first work day in April. Even though this is inconvenient for our bargaining unit, it is a small price to pay when jobs are restored. CEA will agree to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to change some of the dates in the Article 211 calendar. These are the new dates proposed:

- Apr. 11–15: Staff members are notified of administrative reductions
- Apr. 11: 211 training for district offices, 8–10 a.m.; and Regions I and II elementary and middle schools, 1–3 p.m.; Northgate
- Apr. 12: 211 training for high schools, 8–10 a.m.; and Regions III, IV and V elementary and middle schools, 1–3 p.m.; Northgate
- Apr. 19–24: Round 1 postings
- Apr. 25–30: Round 1 interviews
- May 10–14: Round 2 postings
- May 15–20: Round 2 interviews
- May 29–30: Job fairs

CEC addresses the whole child

An optimally healthy child performs better in school, and science backs the data. Schools are in a unique position to unite all the resources necessary for optimal health. This includes sports and the arts. Columbus children need more of all these activities.

At the Columbus Education Commission (CEC) meeting on March 6, specialists in nutrition, the arts and physical education shared what they know about childhood health and development. Speaking to the commission on this subject were Dr. Robert Murray of OSU's College of Education and Human Ecology; Kim Jordan, director of the Eldon Ward YMCA; Jackie Calderone, founding partner of Transit Arts; Milton Ruffin, principal of Ft. Hayes MEC; and Dionne Custer Edwards, a writer and arts educator from the Wexner Center for the Arts.

Here are the key points from the presentations:

- On the state report cards, Columbus ranked 824 of 832 districts for value-added student progress.
- One in five children across the country does not get physical activity and participation in the arts improves academic performance.

Staff survey window extended

You still have time to complete the CEA Staff Survey and be registered to win an iPad or a $25 gas card.

CEA has extended the window to complete the staff survey to 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Apr. 7. CEA needs all members to complete the online survey so that all of us will have an accurate picture of the professional climate in your building. You will be able to view the responses made by your colleagues on the CEA website. This information will be useful to you as you consider applying for positions during the 211 process.

If you have not received an email with the link to the survey, send a message from your non-CCS email address to tellcea@ceaho.org. Include your name and school/unit.
enough to eat. Many poor families supplement their diet with cheap, high-calorie, nutritionally shallow food. Many of CCS’ overweight students are undernourished and unfit.

Brain research shows that physical activity, including play and organized sports, helps develop a child’s brain. Physical activity is connected to the ability to think, plan and reason.

A pilot program in CCS that removed junk food and all soda helped diabetic children significantly reduce their BMI and improve their school performance. One student asked our superintendent when Doritos would return to vending machines. Her answer: "Never."

Arts programs and enriching after-school activities encourage students to explore their passions, develop creative-thinking skills and to lead them toward greater success in school and life.

Columbus has a large and growing number of English Language Learners (ELL) students. We need to help their parents become involved more effectively in their children’s educations. Commission member Elizabeth Martinez, Vice President of Programs for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio; and Abdinur Mohamud of the Ohio Department of Education, educational consultant and Title III state coordinator with the Lau Resource Center for English as a Second Language, presented information about this growing segment of the Columbus community.

The commission also reviewed suggestions from Columbus residents during recent community forums, including more parental involvement, higher expectations, access to appropriate technology tools, more accountability, holistic approaches to teaching, teaching parents how to help their children, linkage between community and school programs, consistent and alternative discipline approaches, business involvement and volunteers, especially seniors.

The commission meets next on Mar. 21. It will issue a draft of its recommendations by Apr. 26. To read more, visit www.reimaginecolumbuseducation.org.