

This is a last-minute update to the MCOECN Newsletter concerning OECN items in the State Budget.

During the week of April 30, Am. Sub. HB No. 94 was passed by the Ohio House of Representatives. This new version of the bill is an 8.7% reduction in the first year and a 17.2% reduction in the second year from the original version of House Bill 94. This also represents a 6.9% decrease in funding the first year and a 13.9% decrease in the second year from the current level of funding received by Data Acquisition Sites. Over the past several years there has been dramatic increases in technological services requested from DA Sites from their member school districts. In order to maintain these quality services, local revenue streams to DA Sites will need to be increased.

Twenty-two years ago the DA Sites provided fiscal services for treasurer offices. Today the technical services provided by DA Sites has expanded to many areas including student information, EMIS, Internet connectivity, library automation and electronic resources, video/distance learning, and student training academies. The most recent version of the budget bill did reinstate some technology programs. INFOhio electronic resources were reinstated into the SchoolNet budget as students will continue to have access to these valuable educational tools. ONEnet Ohio and the Interactive Video Distance Learning projects were funded at a maintenance level so that schools can continue to use the technology that is currently in place. The state legislature and the Governor have made a significant commitment to technology in Ohio's schools. Ohio is now a leader in educational technology. In order to protect this investment, we must at least maintain the current service level.

My first request of the legislators would be to have the Data Acquisition Site subsidy be reinstated to the level specified in the Governor's budget and as stated in the original House Bill 94. This would enable DA Sites to continue their quality services without such substantial requests for fee increases to the local schools. (There also continues to be a greater demand on DA Sites for added management information and more intense technology support on instructional programs for students.) If the legislature determines it is not possible within the current budget constraints to restore the DA Site funding level to the original version of the House Bill 94, I would request that the funding levels remain at least at the current fiscal year level so that school districts are not taking from their current funding to maintain existing services.