

Testimony on the STEM Committee

Sunset Review Committee
Representative Tim Brown, Chair
December 7, 2015

Chairman Brown and members of the Sunset Review Committee, I am Jessica Voltolini, Director of the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs at the Ohio Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present you with information regarding the STEM Committee of the Ohio Department of Education.

The STEM Committee was established by House Bill 119 of the 127th General Assembly. The Committee serves to evaluate and approve proposals for new STEM schools and for schools that seek designation as a STEM school equivalent. As part of the approval process, the Committee must seek recommendations from the Ohio STEM Learning Network. The Committee also serves to award grants to public and private schools to support the operation of STEM Programs of Excellence for students in grades K-8.

The STEM Committee has seven members: (1) Superintendent of Public Instruction, (2) Chancellor of Higher Education, (3) Director of Development, and (4) four public members with expertise in business or STEM fields. The Committee's size enables it to act efficiently in making decisions regarding STEM programs. Members receive no compensation for their service. The Committee meets once a year.

The workload of the STEM Committee consists of ensuring that STEM applications are updated and approved by the ODE legal department, processing applications upon receipt, sending letters of approval/disapproval to a district's request to implement a STEM designated school, ensuring STEM schools adhere to assurance policies, providing technical support as needed, verifying that IRNs are assigned, participating in various state and national STEM-related activities, and participating in STEM-related agency initiatives. Six ODE employees annually devote a combined total of approximately 240 hours to assisting the Committee's work.

We respectfully recommend that the STEM Committee be continued.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to address any questions from the committee.