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### **Ohio's Urban Students Outpace State Gains on Reading, Math Tests**

(November 19, 2004 Cleveland)—Students in Ohio's eight big city school districts have improved test scores over the past five years by larger margins than school districts across the state, according to The Ohio 8 Coalition, an alliance of the state's big-city superintendents and teacher union presidents.

The Coalition tracked reading and math scores on the Ohio Proficiency Tests for fourth and sixth graders from the 1998-99 school year to the 2003-2004 school year, as reported by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE).

Among the urban districts, Youngstown and Cleveland led the way in fourth-grade reading scores, posting gains of 19 percentage points and 18 percentage points, respectively since 1998-99, compared with the statewide gain of 12 percentage points. Seven of the eight districts posted gains higher than the statewide gain in fourth-grade reading scores. (See Chart #1, attached)

In fourth-grade math, seven of the eight big city districts achieved higher proficiency test score increases than the statewide gain of 15 percentage points. Canton, Cincinnati, Toledo and Youngstown all posted gains of better than 20 percent. (Chart #2)

Cleveland and Cincinnati posted the largest student gains in sixth-grade reading scores, weighing in with 20 percentage points and 18 percentage gains, respectively, compared with a statewide gain of 12.5 percent. Half of the big city districts posted gains higher than the statewide average gain in sixth-grade reading scores. (Chart #3)

Five of the big city districts surpassed statewide gains of 14 percentage points in sixth-grade math -- Cleveland posted a 26 percent gain, and both Cincinnati and Columbus marked gains of 22 percent in sixth grade math scores. (Chart #4) The Ohio 8 districts achieved these gains despite enrollments that are increasingly economically disadvantaged and have much higher proportions of students with disabilities. (Charts #5 and #6).

“The data clearly demonstrate that students in Ohio’s urban districts have made a lot of progress over the past five years,” said William Wendling, executive director of The Ohio 8 Coalition. “The urban districts have invested time and resources in focused instructional practices, curriculum alignment, more time on task for students, professional development for teachers and staff and other strategies.

“Certainly, these districts have a long way to go in terms of meeting all of the state standards. But, it’s important not to lose sight of the fact that the hard work of students, teachers, parents and administrators is clearly paying off for Ohio’s urban students.”

The Ohio 8 will sponsor a Summit on Urban Education in Ohio, May 4-5, 2005, to create a forum for sharing among districts the practices that are proving especially effective in each of the Ohio 8 districts.

“This Summit will enable each of the big city districts to examine the practices of their peers in other Ohio cities to see what is working for urban children and why,” Wendling added.

The Ohio 8 Coalition was established in 2001 as a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teachers’ union presidents from Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Coalition represents more than 262,000 students. It is co-chaired by Dr. Gene T. Harris, superintendent of the Columbus Public Schools, and Francine Lawrence, president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers.

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