2014-2015 OAC Straight A Annual Report

Focus on Infrastructure and Development

Ohio
Appalachian
Collaborative
Accelerating College/Career-Readiness ®

STRAIGHT A FUND

U DECIDE
YOUR LEARNING. YOUR FUTURE.

In 2010, the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative (OAC) was established as a partnership among 21 rural districts and not-for-profit partner Battelle for Kids (BFK). Through initial support from Ohio's Race to the Top grant and other philanthropic foundations, the first four years of the OAC focused on building a strong collaborative, establishing networks for professional development and learning, and joining forces to amplify the voice of Appalachian districts to generate resources. Working together, the mission of the OAC became clear: to not only provide enhanced educational opportunities to its more than 34,000 students, but to also strengthen the ties between education and economic development and bring students hope and aspiration for a brighter future.

In December 2013, the Ohio Department of Education awarded a Straight A Fund grant to the OAC to continue its work around transforming rural education. Through the Straight A Fund grant, the OAC has expanded to serve: 27 districts, 98 school buildings, 3,200 teachers, and 48,000 students—with 52% living in poverty.

2014–2015 FOCUS: INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The 27 OAC districts involved in this work successfully:

1 Enabled 48,000 of interested OAC students to begin their journey to success in college, career, and life by taking dual enrollment courses without leaving their school campuses;

2 Provided 3,200 teachers with the opportunity to become dual enrollment credentialed; and

3 Established partnerships with five area universities to support teacher graduate degree programs that lead to dual enrollment credentialing.

- Ohio Dominican University (English)
- Ohio University (History)
- Shawnee State University (Math)
- University of Akron (Business)
- University of Toledo (Biology)

This report provides a high-level overview of these and other impactful accomplishments.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

One of the substantial and lasting values of the shared work in the OAC is to overcome the rural opportunity gap by increasing post-secondary aspiration and preparedness and decreasing post-secondary costs through college or career-tech credentials earned in high school. Dual enrollment courses are being shared across the collaborative through an online course catalog. Currently, 21 districts have loaded their dual enrollment course information onto the OAC Shared Dual Enrollment Course Catalog system. And, 13 institutions of higher education support the OAC Straight A work by offering dual enrollment courses taught in students' own high schools.
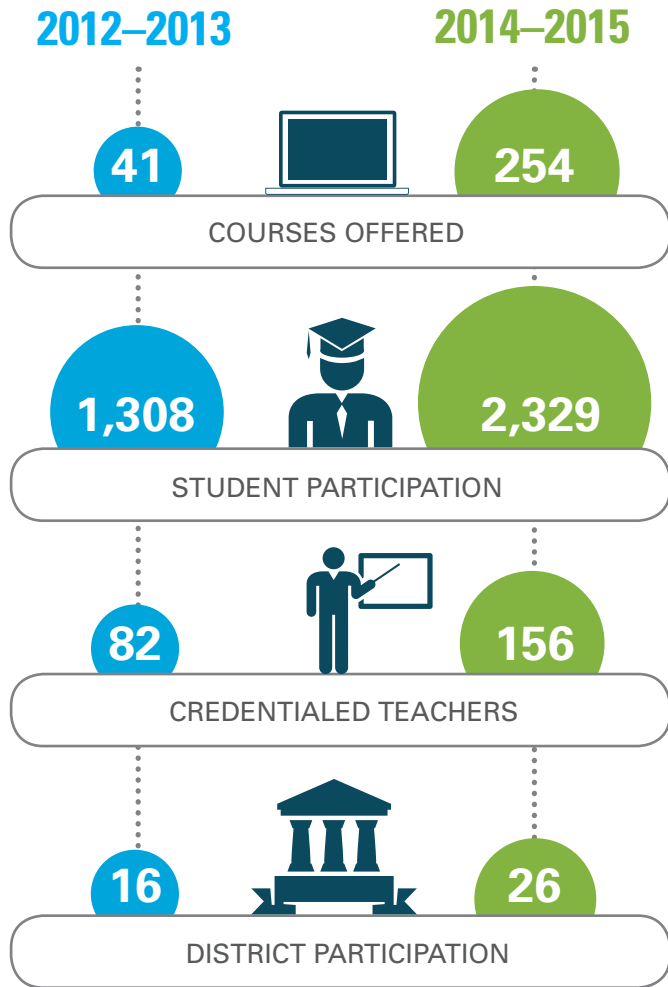
21
districts have loaded their dual enrollment courses onto the OAC Shared Dual Enrollment Course Catalog system

76
teachers are enrolled in graduate degree programs that will enable them to be academically approved as dual enrollment adjunct instructors.

These 76 teachers are enrolled in

15
different institutions of higher education…

…and are pursuing credentials in

12
different content areas.

Through the OAC Straight A project, districts are seeing substantial increases in dual enrollment in a number of goal areas:

2012–2013   2014–2015

	2012–2013	2014–2015
COURSES OFFERED	41	254
STUDENT PARTICIPATION	1,308	2,329
CREDENTIALED TEACHERS	82	156
DISTRICT PARTICIPATION	16	26

DURING 2014-2015, OAC STUDENTS HAVE EARNED

9,746 hours

OF COLLEGE CREDIT.

AND, STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE SAVED MORE THAN

$2.4 million

IN TUITION COSTS.

Design Team

The Dual Enrollment Design Team was established to support the OAC well before the Straight A grant. Its primary purpose is to create a Pre-K–18 pipeline for dual enrollment and teacher credentialing in a quality system. As the OAC matured, this group has also served as a sounding board and a communications conduit for new policy and developments regarding dual enrollment in Ohio. The Design Team will move forward in its advocacy role to help give voice to rural concerns around higher education and dual enrollment policy developments.

Course Quality Assurance

Course quality is a high priority of the OAC. To help ensure the quality of K–12 dual enrollment and professional development courses, two staff members have participated in coursework for both areas through Quality Matters, an international organization that is highly regarded in the certification of online and blended courses with over 900 subscribing institutions. Quality assurance processes have been developed to improve and certify the design of online and blended courses. Due to the collaborative membership and training that has occurred, OAC members have access to:

- Higher Education Rubric
- K–12 Rubric
- Trained staff members for support and professional development
- Resources through the Professional Learning Community, powered by Schoology

Ohio Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

A key part of the progress in dual enrollment for the OAC has been furthering statewide relationships with higher education partners: Ohio Dominican University, Ohio University, Shawnee State University, University of Akron, and University of Toledo. As such, the OAC has developed MOUs with higher education institutions to further dual enrollment implementation and quality, resulting in strengthening the state's workforce pipeline. Further, the OAC has brokered relationships to build capacity in teachers to teach dual enrollment by building online credentialing programs that are more seamlessly accessed across the state.

College Credit Plus and Dual Enrollment Policy/Advocacy

The OAC has furthered the status of rural education with key policymakers in the state of Ohio and across the nation. As such, the OAC has met with the Ohio Department of Higher Education, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), and other key legislators to provide a rural perspective on major educational policy changes and initiatives. The OAC has also provided these groups with policy and advocacy white papers that address:

- College Credit Plus
- Higher education/K-12 relationships
- Teacher credentialing funding for dual enrollment
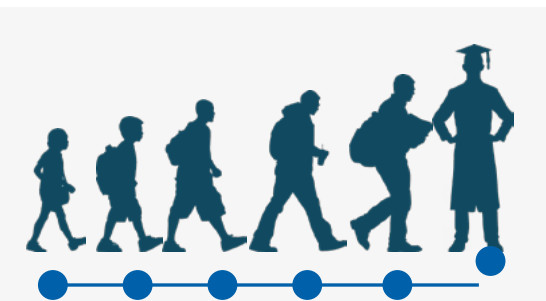
PATHWAYS

Pathways that link learning with student interests and career preparation lead to higher graduation rates, increased college enrollment rates, and higher earning potential. So, four model career pathways—business and entrepreneurship, STEM, arts and communications, and health and human services—were created. These model pathways provided inspiration to help the OAC Straight A districts create their own pathways. Currently, 25 districts have submitted a total of 38 pathways to be implemented in 2015–2016. Each pathway was developed with a diverse group of approximately 80 stakeholders made up of OAC Pathway Leads as well as higher education and business/community partners during three "think tank" sessions.

WORKFORCE AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

Understanding what jobs are available in OAC districts is crucial to developing successful career pathways. To help inform this work, a partnership was established with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce to disaggregate workforce and employment data and generate a report that focuses on each OAC region. OAC districts can glean workforce insights from the report to help inform transformational approaches to enhance student engagement and access to the four career-related pathways: business and entrepreneurship, STEM, arts and communications, and health and human services.

CAREER ADVISING

Career advising is an important component of any career pathway. To help students see a connection between what they are learning in the classroom and their future careers, the OAC has built model Student Success Plans and Career Advising Plans to help guide students toward their strengths for careers beyond high school.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Twenty-seven Professional Development Coordinators (PDCs) were identified from each of the districts to play a critical role in the implementation of the OAC Straight A project. Among other responsibilities, PDCs are charged with:

- Engaging and increasing district educators' use of the OAC Professional Learning Community
- Ensuring effective implementation and use of the dual enrollment catalog
- Helping to implement and accelerate professional learning/development strategies, plans, and resources in and across districts that are connected to the six key areas of professional development: Common Core/standards, formative instructional practices/assessment literacy, student motivation, project-based learning, blended/personalized learning, and new learning technologies

To ensure quick and effective communication between PDCs, a number of different modes of communication were employed, including Basecamp, Twitter, and the OAC Collaboration Space.

OUTREACH EFFORTS DURING THE PAST YEAR HAVE RESULTED IN:

125
DISCUSSIONS AND 57 USERS ON BASECAMP

30
TWEET CHATS ON MULTIPLE SUBJECT AREAS ACROSS THE DISTRICTS

105
PROFILES AND OVER 300 SHARED RESOURCES ON THE COLLABORATION SPACE DISCUSSION BOARD

A project-based learning (PBL) "think tank" with 30 participants was created to gather more information and knowledge on PBL from a variety of sources and make recommendations for PBL training to OAC districts.

PDC Professional Learning Sessions

To further the development of PDCs, seven professional learning sessions—face-to-face, online, and individual—were held for the PDC team so that they could, in turn, share the learning with others in their districts. Professional learning session topics included: using the new Professional Learning Community, supporting adult learners, the Student Experience® Survey, accessing and sharing the Dual Enrollment Course Catalog, designing pathways and navigating the pathways website, understanding Universal Design for Learning, and implementing blended learning.

Highlights of Districts' Success:

- Switzerland of Ohio Local SD sent middle school teachers to observe PBL in Barnesville; used its Facebook page for Straight A updates for teachers along with PBL tools and resources; and collaborated with P16 for workforce development activities
- Several schools sent teachers to Crooksville Exempted Village Schools to observe distance learning models
- East Muskingum Local Schools integrated Google Apps and Google Classroom for Education into classrooms; PD was offered by district staff and Instructional Technology Services of Ohio trainers
- Warren City, Belpre City, Wolf Creek Local, and Fort Frye Local schools are collaborating on a Collaborative Assessment Literary PD Day across districts
- Georgetown partnered with Mason County, Kentucky schools and Morehead State University for 1:1 iPad integration, partnered with Southern Hills Career and Technical Center to explore PBL, and visited Collins Career Center where they strictly use PBL and are trained through Buck Institute
- Bellefontaine provided professional development and instructional coaching on the implementation of technology

Plan Development

The OAC Straight A management team developed a plan for sharing professional learning across the districts and created a plan to train designated district personnel in dual enrollment and pathways work.

Communications Advisory Group

A team of 10 individuals—superintendents, curriculum directors, principals and teachers—were asked to serve on the Communications Advisory Group to provide feedback on communications efforts, resources, and materials. This group met and provided input on the U Decide brand campaign and communications toolkit described below.

U Decide Brand

The U Decide brand campaign and communications toolkit were launched with OAC Straight A districts in August. U Decide was designed to help districts engage students in owning their learning, create awareness around dual enrollment course opportunities, and encourage students to take advantage of earning college credit while still in high school. The toolkit contains messaging around the benefits of dual enrollment and pathways for each stakeholder group, brand standards around the U Decide logo usage and color palette, and communication templates that districts can customize. The U Decide brand campaign logo and tagline are the direct result of focus groups held with OAC Straight A district students.

Website

To help lead the pathways work, the OAC website was updated to include pertinent information, tools, and resources for districts to access and use.

Blogs

Communicating via blog posts continued with 16 blogs authored by OAC Straight A representatives and highlighted districts. Blog topics included: becoming a good coach, reflecting on the year ahead, showcasing progress, collaborating for rural prosperity, staying ahead of the curve, dual enrollment, and learning through professional practices. The blog also featured a recap of the OAC's conversation with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

System of Support Graphic

A system of support visual was created to graphically demonstrate how the OAC Straight A project work is governed.

Overview Video

In response to OAC Straight A districts' needs, a short animated video was produced that provides a high-level overview of the OAC Straight A work to share with stakeholders.

On February 5, 2015, OAC Straight A districts participated along side hundreds of educators, students, legislators, and business leaders in the inaugural Straight A Innovation Conference at the Ohio Statehouse, featuring innovative projects from more than 50 school districts across the state.

The Ohio Department of Education profiled a student from Maysville High School who stated,

"THE STRAIGHT A FUND HAS REPURPOSED MY LIFE."

(For more information: http://bit.ly/1N7ZuZw)

COLLABORATION

Continually evolving the OAC Collaboration Space to meet district's ever-changing needs remained a focal point. In 2014, professional development coordinators (PDCs) were tasked with curating content for the OAC Collaboration Space and populating the site with valuable resources focused on the six key areas of professional learning for OAC districts. In response to their feedback, the Collaboration Space landing page was redesigned to make the upload feature of the resource library easier to use, aligned the tags in the resource library accordingly, and simplified the search feature.

In planning for the life of the grant and beyond, it became clear that a more robust platform is needed for collaboration and professional learning among districts. With feedback from the PDCs, curriculum directors, and superintendents, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed and shared publically with vendors of technology platforms. Through the RFP selection process, the Schoology learning platform was chosen to meet the needs of the OAC Straight A districts and grant.

During summer 2015, this next iteration of the collaboration space—now called the Professional Learning Community, powered by Schoology—was built out and resources were uploaded so that educators can access them beginning in fall 2015.

PUBLICATIONS

What we Learned by Standing on the Shoulders of the Giants of Gulfport (MS) School District—Gulfport (Mississippi) School District Learning Visit, Monograph, and Blog

In January 2015, 26+ OAC and BFK representatives traveled to Gulfport, Mississippi, where the district's mission is, "…to inspire each student to become a problem solver, lifelong learner, and productive member of society," to learn from its educators. There are great similarities in both the processes and components of the pathways the OAC is building in rural Ohio and the ones that are already well-entrenched in Gulfport, Mississippi. The Ohio contingency's goals for this learning visit were to:

* Explore how the district ranks at the top in terms of quality, equity, and productivity of all children;
* Observe the focus, alignment, and feedback mechanisms that are in place; and
* Learn about the programs the district employs in relationship to the goals and deliverables of the OAC Straight A work—credentialing of teachers, dual enrollment for students, pathways, professional learning, and sustainability.

The team from Ohio learned that there are four key components to Gulfport's success. These four components—academic and technical coursework, personalized learning, work-based learning, and career advising and counseling—are what make for sound career pathways that are proving to be integral to great student outcomes. Access the Gulfport monograph here: portal.battelleforkids.org/OAC/impact-and-news

From the First Forty-Eight Through the 21st Century: Building Prosperity Pathways in the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative—OAC White Paper

Ohio has a rich history of its founders building pathways into the Northwest Territory, forging their routes primarily through Ohio's river system and canals in the 1800s. Ohioians built a path into western America that helped lay the foundation for the development of the entire country. This desire to build strong pathways continues to this day and is perhaps best exemplified through the collaboration and hard work of the educators in the OAC that has resulted in a rural education system in Ohio that is now a more robust, state-of-the-art pathway for student success. Access the OAC white paper: portal.battelleforkids.org/OAC/impact-and-news
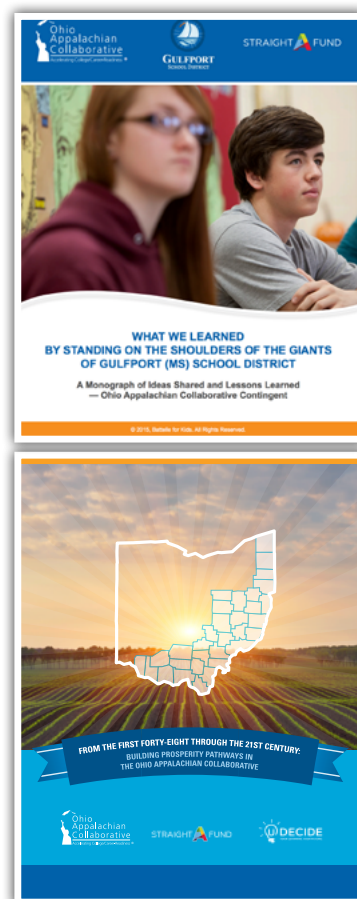
GRANT PERFORMANCE/ IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IMPACT

Governance Structure

A governance structure was established for the OAC Straight A work to streamline efforts and provide collaboration. This structure is made up of a:

- **Steering Committee:** Five superintendents, representing each Pod, and the fiscal agent superintendent serve as the governing body for the OAC Straight A work. The Steering Committee is facilitated by BFK.
  - Pods: Groupings of OAC districts geographically close to one another. All five Pods are helping to implement the OAC Straight A work at the district level.
- **Stewardship Group:** The superintendents from each of the 27 school districts inform the work of the project.
  - A Performance Management Dashboard, an online tool that measures the achievement of project indicators over the life of the grant, was designed as fiscal responsibility is an important part of the OAC Straight A work. Information is captured and shared with the collaborative as a whole, and at the district level.
- The **Financial Implementation Group**, made up of treasurers from each Pod plus the fiscal agent, oversees the financial health of the project. This group met every other month to discuss financial issues and track the cost savings of the grant for sustainability purposes.
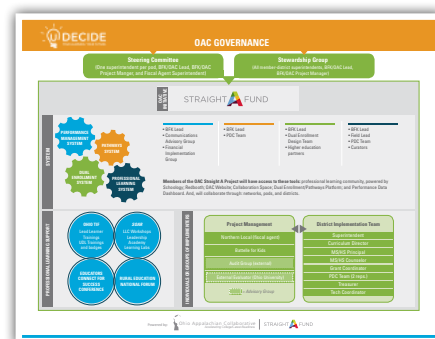
Implementation Support

The OAC Straight A work involves designing and implementing new systems and ways of making education work for students. Planning for the work happened so that each OAC Straight A district realizes success. Implementation supports put into place this year included:

- Districts developing Implementation Plans that identified how they would complete the OAC Straight A work
- Utilizing Redbooth, an online monitoring system, to track each district's progress completing the OAC Straight A work

An OAC Technology Committee was formed to plan, support, and oversee the technology initiatives as determined by the governing authority of the OAC. The Technology Committee meets regularly to review and discuss current digital issues while making recommendations for enhancement and improvement. Specifically, the OAC Technology Committee is charged with issues involving:

- Connectivity/broadband testing and reporting
- Management of accounts and general support of the Professional Learning Community, powered by Schoology
- Virtual course sharing (troubleshooting and support)
- Development of a comprehensive OAC Technology Plan

Policy

For the OAC Straight A work to continue to make an impact, it is essential to engage with and inform state policy and education leaders about the good work of the project and the continued need for educational support in rural Ohio. Helping state leadership understand this good work and learning about the successes already realized as well as the potential future impact of this work are critical to all rural students' success in college, career, and life. Policy work this year included:

- State Leadership Outreach—Worked closely with ODE, the Governor's Office, and the Ohio Board of Regents to ensure that the OAC Straight A project was able to provide maximum benefit to students within the bounds of state law and policy.
- Advocacy—Held regular meetings with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and workforce development leads in Ohio, and OAC superintendents met with U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to discuss rural education.
- Straight A Day—Shared our stories and successes at the first Straight A Day convening at the Ohio Statehouse, and students from OAC high schools testified before the Straight A Governing Board about the benefits of dual enrollment and increased technology in their schools.

Thought Leadership

Building an understanding of the challenges of rural education and tapping into, and then sharing, the knowledge that successful districts employ are key elements of the OAC Straight A work. This past year's efforts included:

- Participated, along with districts, in a trip to Gulfport, Mississippi to learn about their Pathway Systems.

- Delivered instruction on OAC Straight A implementation through the *SOAR* Learning and Leading Collaborative workshops. This simultaneously offered professional development to non-district implementation team members.

- Hosted three Principal Collaboratives throughout the year that resulted in learning sessions specific to the OAC Straight A work. Open Space and collaborative sessions provided opportunities for shared learning.


		The OAC Straight A project team and districts present on an annual basis to discuss and perpetuate their work at national, state, and regional conferences. These standing presentations include (but are not limited to):
☑	**ACT**	ACT hosts an annual conference geared at improving college and career readiness for all Ohio students.
☑	**NACEP**	**The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships** is a national organization that brings together K–12 and higher education organizations across the country to improve dual enrollment quality and implementation.
☑	**OSCA**	**The Ohio School Counselors Association** hosts an annual event for school counselors to gather and learn the most current strategies around student college and career readiness as it relates to school counseling and career advising.
☑	**OACAC**	**The Ohio Association for College Admission Counseling** convenes higher education and K–12 counselors to discuss students transitioning from high school to post-secondary education.
☑	**BFK/ ODE/**	**The Rural Education National Forum** is an annual interactive learning and collaboration experience for rural leaders.
☑	**BASA/ BFK/**	**The Educators Connect for Success** conference is a professional learning experience for educators to examine instruction, gain knowledge, share best practices, and develop strategies to advance student progress in schools.

Research

Research is another key component and benefit to OAC Straight A district participation. Having the ability to partner with leading researchers and access cutting-edge data systems helps to inform the Straight A work. Research work that began during 2014-2015 included:

- OSU–Workforce Data
  - Seven districts participated in a pilot with the Ohio Education Research Center and Ohio State University to use state longitudinal data systems to generate reports about the workforce outcomes of OAC graduates.
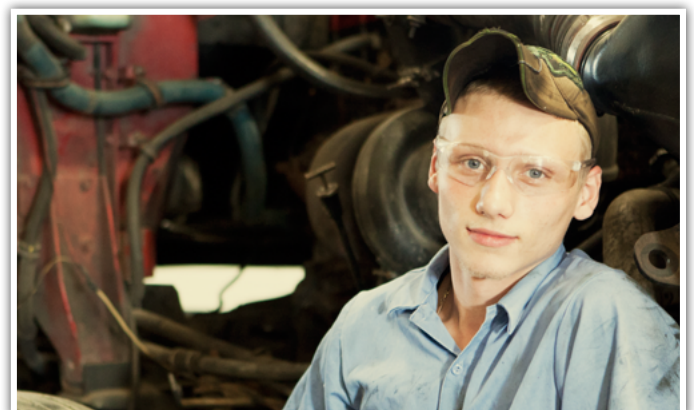
COST SAVINGS

One of the OAC's five values is that districts in the OAC work together to secure, share, and save resources. OAC Straight A districts achieved many measures of success.

Received a
"CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH"
from the Ohio Department of Education fiscal reviewers

Approximately 2,889 OAC students have earned
9,746 DUAL ENROLLMENT credit hours realizing more than
$2.4 MILLION in tuition cost savings

Overall, the OAC realized more than
$260,000
in cost savings in technology equipment through pooled purchasing

21 DISTRICTS
opted to purchase laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, and interactive whiteboards, impacting nearly
320 CLASSROOMS AND 13,000 STUDENTS
across the collaborative

65%
of districts have improved their IT infrastructure, expanding access for
48,000 STUDENTS

An additional
17 DISTRICTS AND APPROXIMATELY 185 CLASSROOMS
now have capacity for blended learning (classroom and online learning), impacting
7,700 + STUDENTS

Funds are supporting the conversion of an estimated
48 CLASSROOMS
into high-tech learning spaces, impacting nearly
2,000 STUDENTS

To learn more about the OAC Straight A work, visit: portal.battelleforkids.org/OAC/oac-home

Ohio Appalachian Collaborative
Accelerating College/Career-Readiness ®

STRAIGHT A FUND

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Ohio's Race to the Top grant and other philanthropic foundations to help level the
playing field for all students in rural Appalachia Ohio. In December 2013,
the Ohio Department of Education awarded a Straight A Fund grant to the OAC to
continue its work around transforming rural education.

Battelle *for* Kids

Battelle for Kids is a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to
moving education forward for students by supporting the educators who work
with them every day. Our mission-driven team of education, communications,
technology, and business professionals provides innovative services,
solutions, and products that empower teachers, develop leaders, and improve
school systems to advance student-centered learning and ensure the growth
of all. Learn how we move education forward at **www.BattelleforKids.org**.