



CRESTVIEW LOCAL SCHOOLS

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Members of the JEOC committee,

My name is Trent Kreischer. I am the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Crestview Local Schools in Convoy, OH. This is my twentieth year in education and fourth year in my current position after being a classroom teacher for 16 years. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak regarding a topic on which I am extremely passionate, public education. With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act in December of 2015, we were told that this would be an opportunity for education in Ohio to get a “face lift.” An opportunity for schools that could lead to change on cumbersome initiatives created by Ohio’s compliance with No Child Left Behind such as student growth measures and OTES, state testing, as well as components of the A-F local report card to name a few.

It was communicated that the ODE would be holding stakeholders’ meetings throughout the state to gather information as well as a series of webinars to gather parent, community and educator input. Then the ODE was to compile the information to create a draft of a plan to comply with the new ESSA requirements. I attended all but two of the eleven webinars live. I filled out the surveys, planned stakeholders’ meetings in our district, gathered feedback from our teachers and community, and spent time with our superintendent and our teachers’ association to help spread the word that this was our big opportunity for input to change some of the flaws that we believe exist in the current system. I even drove nearly two hours to Bucyrus to attend the face-to-face stakeholders’ meeting. Dayton, Toledo, and Bucyrus were the closest meetings to our district, all roughly two hours away. I made it a priority for our school system, and I felt like I did my due diligence to make little Convoy Crestview’s voice heard on issues that we felt affected rural education and our community. However, I feel like only half of the ODE’s stakeholder plan occurred. The part where they gathered the information was great. We were given opportunity to voice opinions in the webinars in the form of surveys, and when I was at the meeting in Bucyrus we had a scribe at every table taking careful notes to make certain that our voices became recorded written feedback. Therefore, I expected to see much of what seemed to be a resounding consensus on many of the issues appear in some form in the ODE’s Draft Overview of Ohio’s State Plan for ESSA. Much to my surprise, this was not the case.

Feedback I heard did not sound quite like what I read in the report. For instance, almost all of the stakeholders I have heard agree the Local Report Card is too cumbersome and that trying to “simplify” it with an A-F grade scale has only created more confusion. The subcomponents that create the grades do not make sense to parents, or teachers for that matter, because they are comprised of confusing calculations that create the component grade. Ohio has the opportunity to simplify the grade card under ESSA by getting rid of the confusing grade component and moving to a more simplistic three-tiered system of school performance. This would negate the competitive nature the A-F report card creates. For example, our district was blasted on social media by some community members based on an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer in which they created, published, and ranked all the “school GPA’s” from across the state. Parents were upset that a neighboring district beat us by .17 and posted it all over Facebook. We advocate for a less labeling report card for districts thus creating a more collaborative landscape, which is extremely important for rural schools who must maintain a system of shared services to

survive. Reports should report, not harshly over evaluate and create confusion Community members and parents only see the grade and do not understand the meaning.

The other issue expressed as a topic of concern is that of state testing. I do agree with the ODE Draft Plan regarding the importance to “stabilize state-level assessments and avoid making new modifications for several years.” However, maintaining the number of assessments and utilizing them on teacher evaluations is not required under ESSA. On February 18, we decided to hold our own education roundtable at Crestview in order to gather local stakeholder feedback and share it with policy makers. Senator Hite, Representative Riedel, and State Board Member Haycock were present at this forum. The sentiments above were strongly echoed during this session. Many of our parents and students expressed frustration over the burden that tests not only placed on them and their families, but also on teachers and school districts. One of our mothers was moved to tears when she shared the story of how her daughter struggles on state assessments and how it causes anxiety and sleep deprivation. Her daughter is 10. Another mother opts her children out of state testing because she refuses to allow her scores to count toward measuring teacher and district performance. Furthermore, students at the forum expressed concern over how teachers feel they must teach only to the test because of the high stakes placed on scores. Under ESSA student growth measures can be removed in teacher evaluations. ESSA also allows the amount of state tests to be decreased even further from 23 down to 17, which we also heard from parents and teachers. The overwhelming message from our community is to allow the provisions in ESSA to unburden our districts as much as possible by releasing the pressure valve. They don’t want to have the state of Ohio supersede the federal law when it’s not necessary.

In summary, in our discussions locally, we found many views that were extremely discrepant with Ohio’s Draft Plan for ESSA. Our community of parents, teachers, and leaders are expressing the need for a shift back to local control and overwhelmingly feel that this plan is being fast tracked without much change from the status-quo. Our best and brightest young people are already avoiding education as a career because of state initiatives like Resident Educator and the program’s required summative assessment. Our message is simple and clear. Let’s slow down with Ohio’s ESSA plan and really listen to what parents, students, and educators are saying. Let’s stop punishing districts who are meeting the community expectations of educating students responsibly by placing unnecessary burdensome initiatives on them. A “one size fits all approach” does not work. We strongly advocate a return to local control so that we may educate our children based on the values and beliefs that our parents hold so truly dear. Thank you.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trent Kreisler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'T' and 'K'.

Trent Kreisler
Crestview Local Schools