

March 9, 2017

Testimony prepared for the Joint Education Oversight Committee

RE: State Template for the Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Child Succeeds Act

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Sykes, and other distinguished members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Jessica Bosak I am a constituent from Ohio House district 23, Ohio Senate district 16 and Board of Education district 6. Prior to becoming the parent of two wonderful little girls, I spend 15 years managing hotels. As a general manager I was responsible for managing all aspects of a business that generated \$3.5M in annual revenue. I attribute much of my career success to the strong foundation I received in public schools. My family did not always live in the most desirable communities but my brothers and I were always supported by talented and caring public school teachers. Now as a parent, I believe it is my responsibility to advocate for my children to have the same opportunities I did regardless of our zip code.

The Every Student Succeeds Act gives us an opportunity to make meaningful changes in our schools that are developmentally appropriate, responsive to the unique needs and challenges of our diverse communities, and changes that are supported by professional educators. Though the Ohio Department of Education touts 13 months of feedback through quorums, webinars and an online survey, it was able to elicit engagement from less than .01% of Ohioans. Education policy affects each one of us but the input ODE received from respondents has been willfully ignored. According to the ESSA Online Survey Results, which received the largest number of respondents at 11,000, the overarching theme is the desire to reduce testing.

- 72% cited goal-based measures and classroom grades as the best measure of STUDENT success while only 15% cited scores from standardized or district tests.
- 70+% cited student growth and progress as the best measure of SCHOOL success while less than 10% cited scores from standardized tests
- 90% evaluated the quality and effectiveness of a teacher by considering overall student growth and in-class performance whereas less than 5% look to standardized test scores

My in my daughter's kindergarten class, her teacher administers 6 tests throughout the year. One is given in the fall while the remaining five are administered three times each throughout the school year. The district is allotted four test administration days throughout the year which is not nearly enough to test a classroom full of five and six year old children so she is forced to utilize classroom time to complete them. Four of the six assessments do inform her instruction but her general belief is that overall too much time is devoted to assessments. By the time she enters 3rd grade she will have taken around 40 assessments and before moving on to 6th grade that total jumps to around 84 tests according to her school district's testing calendar. I realize, with the exception of the 3rd grade English Language Assessment (Third Grade Reading Guarantee test) these are not high stakes tests but it certainly speaks volumes about our overreliance on testing even for such young learners.

The state's plan maintains the current testing schedule of 23 separate assessments resulting in 70+ hours of testing for typical students. The state attempts to satisfy respondents' calls for fewer tests by claiming a reduction of 50% but it fails to identify the sole reason for the reduction as the elimination of the poorly constructed PARCC test. So in addition to losing 70+ hours of classroom instruction, teachers spend several weeks preparing students to take these high stakes tests. By reducing the number of state mandated tests we not only increase authentic learning opportunities but we afford time to enrichment through arts, music and physical education offerings. Increased art and music offerings are another theme frequently cited by survey respondents. Last year a music teacher friend had to cancel her school's spring arts concert when multiple waves of testing meant her students missed her classes during the final weeks of preparations. Needless to say her students and parents were very disappointed. She is concerned the same thing will happen again this year. It is not acceptable that testing should rob students of opportunities to share their creative talents. Education is more than just a test score.

While a reduction in testing was repeated throughout the ESSA stakeholder engagement plan, the state has failed to respond by implementing any change. The plan specifically states "the test participation rate will continue to be a factor in the Performance Index. Schools that miss the 95% participation for all students or for one or more subgroups of students must develop an improvement plan that addresses the reason(s) for low participation in the school and include interventions to improve participation rates in subsequent years." A common refrain of school choice proponents is parents are empowered to make the best educational choices for their child(ren.) So, if parents and teachers know our children are grossly over tested, why is it not acceptable for parents to choose to opt out of diagnostic testing? This provision penalizes schools for a parent choosing what is best for their child. This also says schools will be forced to bully parents and students into participation. Time saved from a reduction in testing can then be better utilized helping students acquire skills employers say are necessary in the workforce like collaboration and creativity. These are not skills quantifiable on any standardized test. Is it really too much to ask that while in school our children are engaged and active learners rather than being perpetually assessed?

As a business professional (in my previous life) I would not dare submit a business plan to my CEO that ignored input from key stakeholders. I guarantee I would be required to rework it and would likely lose credibility as an effective business leader. I urge the committee to delay submitting the state's plan until September. The later submission date provides an opportunity to make substantive and beneficial changes. It is imperative we get this right for all our children. There is no need to rush through the process.

Thank you,

Jessica Bosak