

Joint Education Oversight Committee
Testimony on Ohio's draft plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act
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Chairman Cupp and members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee, my name is Mark Baumgartner, I am a ninth grade English teacher in Cleveland.

I am here to discuss the state's draft plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Right now, state law for teacher evaluation is a 50/50 split with teacher performance in the classroom one half of the total evaluation and student growth the other half.

In Cleveland, we operate under HB 525 and one of the stipulations of the law is that a teacher's evaluation must use multiple measures for the student growth of the evaluation.

One of the unintended consequences of using student test scores is that you need to give a pretest at the beginning of the school year and a post test at the end of the school year for the measure used to determine student growth. That is for one measure. HB 525 calls for multiple measures so at least two assessments must be used that can show growth. Also for good measure, in case one of the district determined pieces of data does not apply for a particular teacher, all teachers have to write a second SLO which requires another pre-test and post test. That means for all 3,200 teachers in the district they are required to give three pretests and three post tests per student just for the student growth measures part of their evaluation.

Every assessment has a window in which it has to be given in order for the tests to be valid with enough days in between pre- and post testing. In most of our schools that means computer lab issues and scheduling nightmares.

That is an overview of the system in place now, but what does it mean for my ninth grade students. At the end of August or early September they are going to take six different assessments for the pretest for student growth that will be used to determine how much growth each of the teachers in the ninth grade team provided for the students. Again, this growth score is half of the teacher evaluation. They will take the NWEA reading test used for the English teacher and the NWEA math test used for the Algebra 1 teacher. Both of these pretests are a two-period test. The ninth-graders are also going to be given the STAR assessment pretest which is used for the English teacher's evaluation. The students will also take the ProCore pretest for Physical Science and the ProCore World History test for the social studies class. The students will also take an art pretest for the Art Teacher's evaluation. All six

of these tests are given from the end of August through the end of September. Now imagine my school where all six of my ninth grade classes have to go through this and then it is repeated in grades 10 and 11.

At the beginning of October two more assessments are given: the Conditions for Learning pretest to gauge how supported students feel in school and the ACT test for ninth graders. My ninth graders have now taken eight formal assessments, six of which are directly used for teacher evaluation - not to produce a grade or data used to pass a student to the next grade level!

There is a little reprieve until the second week in December when the art teacher gives the students her two post tests (one for each of her SLOs) that will be used to show growth and will be half of her evaluation.

Last week, all of my students took the winter NWEA (yes, it is called that because we have to distinguish it from the fall and the spring administration). It was given for both English and math. These tests will not be used for teacher evaluation but the results are used by the district to predict how schools will perform on the Ohio state tests. Both of these tests are two-period tests for each subject. For the NWEA tests, fall and spring are used for teacher evaluation and winter is used for district predictions for their performance for the state report card.

My students are now up to 11 formal assessments given to them and it is only the beginning of March!

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, from March 13 through the middle of April five of the original six assessments given as pretests in the fall will be given again as a post test and the results will be used for teacher evaluations. The art teacher has already given her post test in December. Those tests are: NWEA reading, NWEA math, ProCore Physical Science, ProCore World History, and STAR reading.

From the beginning of April through the beginning of May all of the Ohio state tests will be administered to my students for all four of the core subjects - English, math, physical science and world history. Each of these tests will produce a value-added score that will also be used for teacher evaluation as well as for the district grade on the state report card.

I want you to think about all of this through the lens of my 14-year-old students. It is this way for each of the grade levels they have attended up to this point in their schooling. The vast majority of the tests that I have to subject my students to are used for my and my colleague's evaluation. One of the unintended consequences of all this testing to produce student growth scores for teacher evaluation is that when it is time for the Ohio state tests to be given that will be used to judge the Cleveland district the students are burned out and experiencing test fatigue. They really are tired of all the testing.

The amazing thing is this too. None of these tests produce grades or are used to promote my ninth graders to grade 10. That is done through teacher-made tests that I and my colleagues give throughout the course of the school year at the end of units or at the end of a learning cycle. We teachers give tests to students so we can understand if the students are learning and our instruction is producing results. We give grades based on these classroom tests and our students take them seriously because they know Mr. Baumgartner is putting these in his grade book.

I hope this has given you a picture of what my students go through in just one year of their education. Is it any wonder we cannot get the progress we need when such an inordinate amount of time is spent on testing. The time would be better spent on actual teaching and learning. We are in such a testing culture that it is costing me and my colleagues precious instructional time throughout the year. More important, it is costing students valuable learning time! Thank you.