

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 Debbie Paden, I am a teacher on assignment as the Resident Educator Program Coordinator in Cleveland.

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

I am here to talk to you today about the amount of testing that is occurring in the Cleveland schools in particular, and statewide in general.

State law regarding teacher evaluation in Ohio calls for student growth to be half of a teacher's evaluation. To produce student growth there must be a pre-test and a post test. In Cleveland, all teachers must have two data points of student growth which means two pre-tests and two post-tests. We also must take into account the possibility that one of those two data points might not be available for particular teachers in certain content area so all teachers must give another pre-test and another post-test for another SLO to create a third measure.

I have shared with you what we in Cleveland call Appendix D. It is the go to document for student growth in our district. Every subject and every grade level is covered in it. It has a breakdown of which assessments will count for 35 percent of a teacher's evaluation and which assessments will count as 15 percent. Now remember that each of the assessments listed in Appendix D has two parts, a pre-test and a post test. The column labeled Vendor Assessments is counted as 35 percent and the column listed Your Primary SLO (SLO1) is counted at 15 percent. There is also a column labeled SLO2 Assessment and this represents the extra tests in case either of the previous data points don't appear.

What that really means is that each grade level and specific subject is tied to six assessments (three pre-tests and three post tests) just for the purpose of finding student growth to use on that teacher's evaluation. And if a teacher teaches multiple grade levels or multiple subjects you can double or triple that number. If a teacher is teaching seventh grade English and social studies, there will be six assessments for seventh grade English and six assessments for seventh grade social studies.

It is the same at the high school where a teacher might teach ninth grade math and 10th grade math. There will be six assessments for ninth grade math and six assessments for 10th grade math.

The students will then be given the Ohio state tests but that does not appear on Appendix D because this year is the final year of Safe Harbor legislation where the Ohio state tests cannot be used for student or teacher evaluation. We never stopped giving the Ohio state tests during Safe Harbor, we just stopped using the results in teacher evaluation.

Appendix D is revised yearly to reflect what tests are approved by the state for Vendor Assessments to use for teacher evaluation and if they are not on the state list for use as a vendor test then the assessment is used as an SLO assessment.

I have shared with you also the CMSD testing calendar labeled testing dates. It is the window when all tests need to be given. It shows the pre-tests and the post-test window. It shows when the Ohio state tests are to be given. There is little time during the school year when there isn't some sort of test being administered to our students in Cleveland. The testing calendar is important because it lets teachers know exactly when they should be testing students for the assessments that will be used as part of their evaluation. These two documents are important for you all to see but there are another couple pieces of documentation that need to be examined. The first one is labeled Formal K-8 Testing SY 2016-17 and the second one is labeled K-8 Testing SY 2016-17.

The document labeled Formal K-8 Testing is a visual representation of the testing calendar and Appendix D in a different format that is more striking. It shows all the items in Appendix D and where they fall on the testing calendar for all the grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. These are our youngest students and it shows the amount of testing that they go through every year for their first nine years of school. Each grade level is labeled and all the formal tests are shown with the amount of time required to administer them throughout the year. The only assessment listed here that is not used for teacher evaluation is Conditions for Learning (CFL) which is to gauge how students feel supported and how they feel about school. Also listed is mandatory testing in kindergarten through third grade as part of the Third-Grade Reading Guarantee. There is mandatory monitoring of students that occurs in those grades.

The other document is labeled K-8 Testing. It shows when teacher-made tests are used from text books as well as all the other testing for monitoring that is mandated by principals or regional superintendents. A lot of formal assessments are given to our students. When you add all the other tests on top of them, our students feel that they go to school only to take tests.

It should be clear from the data that I have shown you how dominant testing is in the lives of CMSD students. Likely it is similar in many districts across the state. If we are to allow students to grow through their learning they must be given the instructional time to have a deep understanding of the concepts at every grade level. Testing should not be the priority as these data show; instruction and learning should be the priority.