

Testimony for HB176  
Deborah Kruse Guebert, M. Sc.

Chairman Brenner, Members of the Education Committee, I am here to support this effort to restore some of the lost freedoms to the students in our schools. In this United States of America, we have allowed massive inroads into our freedom to speak openly of our true thoughts and beliefs. This begins with the teaching and conditioning of our children, out of sight, in our classrooms. The Common Core Standards and Assessments were not the beginning. They simply acted to codify and enforce the failed form of schooling known as Outcome-Based Education, which was tried and found seriously wanting back in the 90s.

The world has suffered much from Utopian ideologies. The idea that by controlling the behavior of “the masses”, by compulsion if necessary, a Brave New World of wonderful opportunities will dawn holds great attraction for some. Unfortunately, these schemes fail sooner or later, because they are not based on how people really behave. Human nature is not naturally altruistic. We are not, nor should we be, willing to sacrifice personal goals and identity for a prescribed uniformity of thought that is supposedly in the interests of the common good. This is the goal of “progressive” education, and has been practiced in our schools for decades. When a faceless system tries to reduce us to mere “widget” status, we must reject that system. “Progressive” attempts to impose a collectivist workforce orientation on people with hearts, souls, and minds, will inevitably fail – but at a life long cost to those who were caught in that trap.

Despite the lessons of history, which demonstrate the failure, time and again, of centralized planning, we are nevertheless seeing attempts to impose centrally controlled education on our children and our schools. The utopian “progressive” dream of using the power of government to condition the next generation to accept conformity and groupthink is alive and well in Ohio, aided and abetted by our legislatures and the Ohio Department of Education.

Having personal experience with several centrally-controlled educational systems, I am keenly aware of what is ahead for us if we continue along that route. I was born and raised in Japan, and although my years in the Japanese school system were limited, the obvious effects on students, and therefore later on the adult population, of such standardization were impossible to miss. Despite extremely high academic standards and achievement, initiative and creativity were crushed by the uniformity demanded of all students. The narrow focus on exam success in Japan, resulting in ubiquitous cram schools and a high youth suicide rate, is well-known.

Several other Asian countries with high PISA exam results are also poster children for the effects of focusing intently on conformity and the standardization of belief and behavior. Those parents wealthy enough to have options, often choose to send their offspring to be educated in the West. China is at the head of this list, with more than 300,000 arriving to study at American universities for the 2014-2015 school year, according to Institute of International Education figures.

Should this tell us something about exam focused education? Not to belabor the point, but standardized learning and standardized test-taking ability seem not to be the ingredients

of a fulfilling life. Any system, which imposes its values and goals by compulsion, is anathema to the free man or woman.

Replacing one form of top down “education” with another, or one system of assessments with another, does not change this dynamic. Only addressing the problem at the root, and freeing our children & schools from groupthink imposed by bureaucrats, will allow the sprouting of healthy new shoots.

Although I have come to see the overall picture, which I have spoken about here,

I first came to this subject from the viewpoint of a math tutor, with degrees in Physics and Mathematics. As previously noted, I grew up in Japan. After returning to the U.S. for college and graduate school, I ended up back overseas as an adult, where as a parent, I dealt with a socialized educational system in England. Later we lived in France, where I have taught middle school English National Curriculum math, and tutored International Baccalaureate students. Returning to the U.S., I have worked with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders as a volunteer in a local homework help program here in Ohio, and continue to tutor professionally up through AP Calculus. I also have several years experience homeschooling a child, who graduated successfully from the University of Cambridge in England.

Having spent hundreds of hours researching the “progressive” approach to math, including as a member of the first Ohio C. C. Math Review Committee, I am deeply disturbed by the sloppiness and overall incoherence of even primary level math. With an introduction like this, it is impossible to expect success at higher levels. In any case, having had their naturally logical minds frustrated by incoherence and inconsistency, no child will be interested. Real math is beautiful, due to its inherent order, logic, and pattern. It is naturally attractive to young minds when introduced properly. And it can provide life long pleasure to them, however rich or poor they may be.

The perversion perpetrated on math is only one result of an ideology that sees other people’s children simply as uniform products to be molded according to its own value system; to be shaped into compliant workers for the good of society. SEL, or Socio Emotional Learning, is an even deeper invasion into the private minds of our children. Computer mediated learning enables the direct application of behavioral control techniques developed by Russian psychologist Pavlov in his experiments with animals. This is being done openly with our children, all in the name of improving society by training them to respond in “better” ways. References to relevant studies can be found throughout the educational literature, including studies paid for by our own USDoe.

Most teachers understand this, but are not willing to say so publically. They say that they are afraid they will lose their jobs. Many with scruples about this kind of manipulation have already resigned from the profession, unwilling to participate in such practices.

Similarly, there is reluctance on the part of parents to raise the issue with school principals or district superintendents. It seems that intimidation and control by a state directed system is already evident in our society.

Is this what the freedom to enjoy one's life, one's liberty, and to pursue one's own happiness looks like? Is this the kind of future that we want to bequeath to our children and grandchildren?

I beg you to reconsider permitting the state to interfere in such matters, to listen to your constituents, and to represent them honestly and with courage.

Thank you for your time and attention.