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3rd House District

Sponsor Testimony for HB 540
Education and Career Readiness Committee
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HB 540 – Teacher Evaluation Reform

In fall 2016, the Educator Standards Board (ESB), representing education stakeholders across Ohio, began reviewing the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) to provide recommendations for updating the existing system. Their recommendations identified ways in which the efficiency, fairness, transparency, and accountability in teacher evaluations could be improved.

The ESB's reform recommendations are encapsulated in HB 540. These proposed reforms seek to restructure OTES so that evaluations are teacher-driven and student-focused. Student learning is supported by the development of quality educators. HB 540 recognizes that evaluations should provide teachers with relevant feedback that helps them continuously improve their practice in the classroom. In this way, high-quality teacher evaluations benefit both teachers and students.

What is the Educator Standards Board?

As a quick background on the ESB, the Ohio General Assembly created this advisory body in 2004 with a mission of promoting the quality and professionalism of educators while also ensuring public accountability on behalf of the students and citizens of Ohio.

The ESB has 21 voting members. They include teachers, administrators, local school board members, parents and representatives of higher education. Six non-voting, ex-officio members include the Superintendent of Public Instruction or a designee of the superintendent, the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education or a designee of the chancellor, the chairperson of the Senate Education Committee, the chairperson of the House of Representatives Education Committee, and the ranking minority members of the Education Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Why the need for OTES reform?

The Ohio General Assembly approved the current OTES framework in 2011 as part of Ohio's compliance with federal funding under the Race to the Top grant program. After years of implementation, the current teacher evaluation system has left teachers feeling that the system is unfair and ineffective, especially with the use of a student growth measure (e.g. value-added) as a 50% component of the evaluation. Further, the evaluations have failed to serve as a useful tool for professional development and as a means of providing useful feedback for teachers. Simply put, these evaluations are not helping teachers or their students in the way in which they should. HB 540 seeks to correct the shortcomings of the current system by implementing the recommended reforms of the Educators Standards Board.

What are the ESB recommendations for OTES reform?

1. Update OTES Rubric

The rubric will now embed student growth indicators, clarify descriptors to decrease redundancy, and improve clarity in the distinctions between performance levels.

2. Embed Student Growth into the Revised OTES Rubric

The evaluation framework will use at least two types of "high quality" student data that may be used as evidence in any component of the evaluation related to the following:

- a) Knowledge of the students to whom the teacher provides instruction;
- b) The teacher's use of differentiated instructional practices based on the needs or abilities of individual students;
- c) Assessment of student learning;
- d) The teacher's use of assessment data;
- e) Professional responsibility and growth.

This reform means the stand-alone 50% student growth measure will be replaced with an evaluator's review of how a teacher uses student growth measures as a data point to inform adjustments in classroom instruction. In other words, student growth data will be linked with improving instruction, as opposed to an isolated evaluation factor linked to an arbitrary percentage. This shift in focus reflects the original intent of those who conceived student growth measures like value-added. The bill requires ODE to define "high quality" student data for this purpose, one of which must include the value-added progress dimension if applicable to the grade level or subject area taught by a teacher (grades 4-8, reading and math).

3. Remove Shared Attribution

Shared attribution does not accurately measure teacher performance or student growth because it uses assessments for a group of students that the educator does not teach. In addition, this measure does not encourage inter-disciplinary collaboration as intended.

4. Embed the Alternative Framework Components as Sources of Evidence in the Revised OTES Rubric

By embedding student growth and achievement as required indicators within the revised rubric, a separate alternative framework is no longer needed. Instead, the alternative framework components:

student portfolios, student surveys, peer review, self-evaluation, and district-determined measures, will remain as optional sources of evidence of teacher effectiveness.

5. Tailor Structure and Timing of Observations to Meet the Needs of Teachers in Order to Focus on Improvement and Growth

For teachers on a full evaluation cycle, the two required formal observations and optional number of walkthroughs will be maintained, along with a required end of annual cycle conference with the evaluator. The first observation would be conducted at the beginning of the year. The pre-observation conference is optional, but a post-observation conference is required during the first semester. Walkthroughs will occur thereafter to focus on specific areas that may need support. The second observation would be conducted in the second semester. Consideration for nonrenewal requires a third formal observation cycle.

6. Provide a Professional Growth Process for Teachers Rated Accomplished and Skilled

The current provisions on the evaluation of teachers in a municipal school district and the rating performance levels will be maintained. Additionally, the off-year evaluation schedule for teachers rated skilled or accomplished will be maintained but adds:

- a. The requirement of a conference in off-years for skilled and accomplished teachers to discuss professional growth and progress toward goals
- b. The requirement that teachers who are rated as skilled must submit in off-years professional growth plans developed with their evaluations

This bill will pilot a revised evaluation framework with these recommendations beginning in the 2018-2019 school year and fully implement it in the 2019-2020 school year. The pilot will give school districts and the Ohio Department of Education the time they need to adjust and adapt.

Conclusion

In conclusion, HB 540 supports teacher improvement with more specific, useful, and relevant feedback that is focused on student learning.

It increases the value of classroom walk-throughs, formal observations and conferences by placing greater emphasis on identified areas of feedback for improvement.

In addition, it helps students by refocusing the use of student growth measures as a tool that teachers can use to customize instruction and student learning.

Thank you for your consideration of support for HB 540. We are available for any questions you may have.