

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

HB 540 - PROPONENT TESTIMONY

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Good afternoon. My name is Jeanne Cerniglia. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today as a proponent for the HB 540 revisions to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) process. I started teaching in 1974. While I took time off to raise children, I have watched the teaching profession change over the last 40 years. As a middle school math teacher in Southeast Local Schools (Wayne County), I served on several state committees including the Advisory Committee for Math Standards Revisions, the writing team for middle school math standards, and the writing team for middle school math Model Curriculum.

Over the last 8 years I have been involved in OTES in different capacities – early Battelle trainings, piloting program, credentialed evaluator process, and then facilitating the implementation in my district. As a member of the Educators Standards Board, I participated in the effort to recommend revisions to the OTES process and was a member of the team that presented the purposed OTES revisions to the State Superintendent and State Board.

The sponsor's testimony did an excellent job of encapsulating the recommended revisions to the present OTES process. My goal this afternoon is to provide some of the rationale for those recommendations as an ESB member but also some insight of my personal experience during the last five years teaching with OTES and what that looks like for both the teacher and the student. I will be focusing mostly on Recommendations 2 and 5, as they are most critical to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing evaluation system.

The effectiveness of the evaluation process in education is critical to the success of our children. The process should be a growth model for teacher professional development and create conditions for teachers to do their best job in growing students. Doing their best means never standing still but actively participating in continual professional development. The evaluation tool should necessitate a cohesive and meaningful process promoting growth. It will often determine the mindset for those involved. A growth mindset is critical to growing student success.

Recommendation 1: Update OTES Rubric

The rubric has been well received over the past five years by teachers and administrators as a critical first step and remains a critical piece of the process as it establishes a common language and set of expectations between the teacher and evaluator. However, there are areas in the existing rubric that needed to be clarified and streamlined. The recommended rubric revisions provide administrators and teachers with more clarity and cohesiveness that fosters specific and relevant feedback to strengthen those professional conversations that can lead to more effective professional development planning.

The ESB spent a significant amount of time working on the rubric to create a more cohesive in drawing connections between the overlapping components of teaching and learning. Practically, the revisions encourage a richer and more connected conversation as opposed to thinking about each component as an isolated piece of the teaching process and an intentional embedding of data analysis and its use in informing instruction.

Recommendation 2: Embed Student Growth Measures in the Rubric

(I am a value-added teacher and have been successful in the present system.)

Both student growth measures and student achievement data are necessary to effectively plan for and implement student learning. Modifying the way in which student academic growth and achievement data are included in teacher evaluations will allow teachers and evaluators to focus on data-driven instruction and reflections concerning their professional growth. This recommendation emphasizes that teachers use student growth data and achievement data to inform their instruction. It clarifies the use of data in all aspects of the teaching/ learning process. Embedding student growth measures into the rubric and increasing the focus of other high-quality data promotes the effective and efficient use of all meaningful data to ensure student success.

Aside from teacher accountability, a possible value of student growth measures is similar to an autopsy. It can show general trends across several years and trends in specific subgroups. As a teacher, if I ignored that data or used only that data to inform my instruction, I would not be doing my best for my students. That data is a part of my reflection on my instructional strategies and decisions about the previous year for the next year but cannot be the only data I use in making decisions for this year's students. Teachers haven't become more inquisitive and capable using data, they have focused on getting good results on one type of assessment. Placing a priority on state testing in the evaluation has been counterproductive. Separating out the AIR scores give them a significant prominence that skews the teaching/learning process.

It is essential to student success that teachers effectively use data to differentiate and adjust instruction and use the outcomes of that data to help all students grow. Teaching is a dynamic and creative process. My planning and instruction are only as good as my ability to act and react to each individual student's processing of the intended learning. Differentiating based on student data is ongoing throughout the teacher's process planning, instruction, and reflection. We know that people learn differently in different ways and at different capacities of depth. Teaching is not a one size fits all effort.

The strength of our recommendation is that it mandates teachers to use all relevant data in making decisions for the success of each student. Most critically, it intentionally asks the teacher to visibly show and respond to the how and why of teaching decisions.

Recommendation 3: Eliminate Shared Attribution

Shared attribution would not be a valid source of evidence of an individual teacher's performance or most importantly provide relevant data for the teacher or evaluator to provide feedback focused on improvement.

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

The components in the alternative framework would now serve as optional sources of evidence of teacher effectiveness.

Recommendation 5: Tailoring Structure and Timing of Observations to Meet the Needs of Teachers in Order to Focus on Improvement and Growth

It is important that observation opportunities allow teachers to demonstrate authentic, effective practice and professional growth. The revised process would help teachers focus on genuine areas for growth rather than feeling pressure to perform in an inauthentic manner. The evaluator's time can be used more efficiently by focusing walk-throughs and the second observation on identified areas of professional growth. Rather than collecting and analyzing evidence for all the indicators, the evaluator is focused on the identified areas of need.

The recommendation provides a more continual and holistic approach to the process. The process focuses on improvement and emphasizes the importance of the professional growth plan. The existing process focuses on two stand-alone observations. The recommendations establish a thread tying together the continued process of a teacher's professional growth focusing on identified area(s) for possible improvement. That continual conversation is functionally less time consuming for the evaluators. Every teacher (regardless of their rating) works to refine their practice because their best for their students is continually changing.

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

Professional growth process is strengthened by requiring a professional conversation with the evaluator focused on the teacher's professional growth plan and progress towards those goals developed based on their evaluations.

In conclusion, these recommendations build on the components of the present system. The rubric continues to establish common language and delineated expectations. The observation process continues to include the basic components of the professional growth plan, two observations, walk-throughs, and professional conversations between the teacher and evaluator to determine areas of possible professional growth through collaboration and monitoring.

These recommendations create the opportunity to enhance the process as a growth model that effectively embeds all available sources of high-quality data in every aspect of the teaching process. It establishes a more fluid and efficient process of evaluation and a more effective and focused process for continued professional growth for the teacher. There is significant impact on each student's success in that the decisions made each day by the teacher for their students are made as part of cohesive, differentiated, and effective instruction supported by high quality data. We want teachers that are continuously growing in their understanding of how their students learn and how best to meet their needs based on defensible decisions.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 540. I am available to answer any questions you may have.