

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

HB 540 – PROPONENT TESTIMONY

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Good afternoon, my name is Jonathan Juravich. I am the 2018 Ohio Teacher of the Year, and an art educator with Olentangy Local Schools, at Liberty Tree Elementary. Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 540, which contains teacher evaluation reforms that would improve the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). These reforms are based on the recommendations of the Educator Standards Board and have also been approved by the State Board of Education.

Currently OTES requires that 50% of evaluations for educators in all grades and subjects must be based on a student growth measure. Therefore, in Olentangy we saw very early on that for the Unified Arts, Student Learning Objectives (or SLOs) were going to become a part of our educational story as high-stakes student growth measures.

In order to prepare for the implementation of OTES, I was sent as a district representative to trainings and meetings concerning SLOs. I have facilitated professional development and presentations on the subject since. For example, I am the Elementary Art Department Chair for our district and led my fellow teachers in the development of our district assessments and SLO procedures. I have had a lot of experience in this area, and yet, each year I find myself more concerned about the final results of a single assessment than I am about the incredible growth my students have made, and what these results say about instruction in my classroom.

During their very first art class of the year, I ask second grade students to create a piece of artwork, respond to two images in front of them, and identify the elements

of art. Does a student identify an image of a square as the element of art “SHAPE” or do they write “a piece of cheese?”

This pre-assessment has been incredibly helpful in guiding my instruction throughout the rest of that school year. I ask myself how will I use these data points, to inform instruction practices based on the needs and abilities of my individual, unique students?

Where this becomes problematic is that after I evaluate this pre-assessment I make arbitrary predictions of how students will perform at the end of the year on a similar assessment. And then consider how this will effect my overall evaluation, knowing that the results will be a 50% weighted portion of the final outcome.

I try to take into account my previous experience with students in that grade level, and talk over thoughts with my colleagues, “what is a rigorous goal that is actually attainable?” None of this takes into consideration the fact that I am working with actual children. Just now is when I stop and think about how these students may have life experience over the year that could affect their overall performance towards my assumed goal: illness, level of support, loss of a family member.

This past week I sat with all of my student’s post-assessment data in front of me and entered their results. Instead of celebrating that a student truly made incredible progress from a 35 to a 76 out of 100, I instead held my breath. I let out a sigh of relief that they were 1 point above my arbitrarily chosen growth target of a 75.

My student growth data is good. My evaluations based on observations are successful. But instead of focusing on how these two areas are entwined, or how they should be reflective of one another... these two halves of my evaluation are considered in isolation, only to be brought together on a single form at the end of the year.

HB 540 would make the OTES process more coherent. By using student growth measures as a source of evidence in the conversations between educator and evaluator, we are emphasizing the importance of our impact on our students. The resulting feedback should be specific, useful, and relevant with a focus on student learning. I fully believe in a strong, consistent evaluation process for what it can tell us about who we are as educators and our effectiveness in the classroom.

HB 540 would help both teachers and students by refocusing OTES as an informative feedback tool that teachers can effectively use to support students. Teachers would be evaluated on *how* they use “high-quality” student growth measures to inform and improve classroom instruction for the benefit of their students. In other words, no longer would student growth measures be used as a disconnected evaluation factor linked to an arbitrary weighted percentage.

HB 540 would also require ODE to define “high quality” student data and provide guidance to districts on how such data may be used as evidence of student learning within the new OTES framework. This could be particularly useful for the application of OTES for the Unified Arts.

Not every district has a large, collaborative team of art educators as I have the privilege to be a part of in Olentangy. According to the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education, “Arts educators are often left on their own to develop assessments and identify student growth measures, often without adequate background in assessment design and implementation. Research indicates that a large percentage of arts teachers do not believe they’ve been adequately prepared to develop arts assessments, feel they do not have time to revise and improve their assessments, and typically work in isolation to find or create whatever assessments they do use.”

In summary, HB 540 promises to significantly improve OTES, making it a far more useful tool to support the continuous improvement of educators and their students.

I encourage the House Education Committee to support HB 540.

Thank you for your consideration and I am available for any questions you may have.