



**Proponent Testimony on HB 239
Presented by Darold Johnson
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Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Jones, and ranking member Robinson, my name is Darold Johnson, of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT) Director of Legislation. OFT represents 20,000 teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts and public employees across the state of Ohio. OFT supports House Bill 239, which reduces the number of high school tests and establishes a method to review overall testing in school districts.

Assessments and tests are integral parts of the instructional process; however, focusing on assessments and tests to provide a number for a report card or a rating for an educator's evaluation produces a toxic environment that does not support learning. It is time to devise a rational system of assessment that will benefit the most influential people in this discussion: our students. Their future depends on getting this right.

In 2015, OFT published a position paper on testing that calls for ending the testing mania in Ohio schools and moving toward a system of assessments that supports meaningful learning. The legislature adopted many of those recommendations. HB 239, goes further by reducing high school exams and requiring local school districts to review the time students spend on testing, compared to the state limits. Many of the points we made then still stand today. It is time for assessments to be used to give us information to help kids learn.

For instance, the most crucial part of the 3rd-grade reading guarantee process, is the assessments of students along the way that determines interventions is most valuable. Administering interventions is essential. Threatening retention based on the 3rd-grade state assessment is not as helpful. If the system is to work correctly, students will progress through the use of formative assessments.

To accurately provide support to students, it is important to back off using assessments as data points to give a number on a report card or evaluation. When we focus on the local report card rather than the student, it produces a plethora of unnecessary assessments - benchmarks, pre-

tests, test practice - that take away valuable instructional time and, thus, the opportunity for students to learn. This action is the opposite of what we all intend for our children.

Formative testing to provide information to support instruction is helpful. Summative testing to make sure the school and district will meet the proper data point has a whole different feel and produces anxiety for students and educators, quite possibly parents as well.

It is vital for local district administration and teachers to work together to determine what their students need, what contributes to student learning, and to feel confident that students can progress organically as opposed to the artificiality imposed by testing for accountability purposes.

This discussion has been focused on the wrong question. Rather than discuss solely how many assessments we have and how to cut down on them, or how much time we spend in testing and how to reduce it, **we should focus on the assessments that are needed to help inform instruction and interventions that best educate our students.**

Because we have new members on this Committee, I would like to briefly describe the different types of assessments that are possible.

WHAT IS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND TESTING?

Assessment is part of a teacher's effective practice. Assessments tell teachers what students have learned and what skills and content students haven't mastered yet. A proficient teacher is continuously assessing their students through formal or simple methods to inform their understanding of where each student is in the learning process and what next steps are needed to help students meet standards.

Unfortunately, these types of assessments are often lost in discussions of testing, and a term generally used to describe large-scale, standardized, end-of-the-year state or district tests. The two must work hand in hand. High-quality summative testing should be a component—not the be-all and end-all—of a comprehensive assessment system.

WHAT IS A DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT?

A diagnostic assessment assesses a few concepts or skills (three or fewer) and typically comes before the beginning of instruction. Teachers use the results of the diagnostic assessment to plan instruction and tailor interventions for individual students.

WHAT IS A FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

Formative assessments are frequent interactive assessments or assignments used to give feedback to students or guide instruction. They provide data on student understanding and progress that informs day-to-day and moment-to-moment instructional decisions. They can

range from formal to informal assessments that guide the teacher in ensuring that students' needs are met. Examples include daily quizzes, discussions in class, reviews of student work in class, observations, exit slips, homework and any activity that allows the teacher to see where students are at that moment in time.

WHAT IS A SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

Summative assessments are used to determine whether students have acquired the desired knowledge at the end of the teaching processes—typically after a particular unit or time period. They provide a summary of performance and include assessments that result in a grade, end-of-year or end-of-course exams, and performance-based assessments.

Summative assessments are best used to determine large-scale, systematic, or programmatic changes, including changes in materials/textbooks to purchase, curricular decisions, staffing, and professional development. They are generally not useful for day-to-day instruction for teachers but can shape system improvement in the future. Depending on the type and quality of the test and data, individual educators can benefit by reflecting on the data and taking steps to modify strategies and techniques going forward. Because summative assessments tend to come at a culmination point, students rarely glean meaningful information from them.

Summative assessments can be large-scale, state-mandated standardized assessments, but they can also be teacher-created end-of-unit tests.

INVOLVING CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN DETERMINING THE FORMATIVE/DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT SYSTEM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

It is essential to include voices from the classroom in determining the assessments that support the standards and provide information that can guide educators in taking the next steps to ensure students are learning the standards. With an effective formative/diagnostic assessment system in place, teachers will be able to maximize instructional time and focus on creating positive learning environments that foster student growth and provide the supports students need to advance their learning.

HB 239 continues to move the ball down the field. We thank Rep. Gayle Manning and Rep. Crawley for introducing this bill and seeking our input during the drafting process. We also trust that any language changing graduation requirements will be harmonized with this bill. OFT supports passage of HB 239 and I welcome any questions you may have.