Lakota Local School District
Testimony – House Bill 74
House Education Committee
March 11, 2015

Chairman Hayes, Vice Chairman Brenner, Ranking Minority member Fedor, and members of the committee, my name is Karen Mantia. I am superintendent of Lakota Local schools in Butler County, the eighth-largest school district in Ohio, with more than 16,000 students. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 74.

I am here today to speak about the Resident Educator program, a four-year-long new-teacher induction and mentoring program that the Ohio Department of Education oversees, in order for a new teacher to receive a five-year license.

The first cohort of teachers to go through the program is just finishing it. I've taken a lot of time recently to sit down with them and talk about the program, how it worked for them, what's good about it and what could be better.

It's very clear talking to them that they understand the Resident Educator program is well-intentioned, and that the ODE put very significant financial resources into overseeing it. They also understand and appreciate the program's goals. The program was put in place to, among other goals:

"Support and encourage successful transition into the profession."

"Shelter beginning teachers from inappropriate workloads."

"Create and sustain a community of professional practice through collaboration."

The Ohio Department of Education hired a private company, TeachScape, based in California, to oversee the third and fourth years of the program. TeachScape is a solutions-based company designed to provide assistance to school districts and agencies in evaluation processes and research. It has on-line training modules and activities and other resources.

The Resident Educator program was a good idea, at the time. But just a couple of years later, a new evaluation system for teachers, the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, called OTES, was implemented. The implementation of OTES makes some parts of the Resident Educator program a duplication of effort. OTES is a strong teacher performance evaluation process, centered exactly in the areas where all teachers work daily -- instructional planning, assessment, and professionalism. It strengthens collaboration between teachers and their principals. This aligns with the goals of the Resident Educator program in its first two years.

Years three and four of the Resident Educator are focused on Resident Educator Summative Assessment, or RESA. These new teachers spend hours video-taping their classrooms and uploading assessments to show a hired evaluator proof of their work. The Participant Handbook for the 2014-15 school year is 115 pages long, and it reads like a technical manual to set up a new television. The new teachers spoke about maddening hours trying to deal with uploading on a balky online system, one that they weren't even permitted to use until after 3 p.m. every day. They talked about all the hours to prepare and submit the required analyses, only to wait to have it assessed by people who have never met them or talked to them, and then to have the results delivered approximately six months later. They talked about the complete lack of feedback from the system, especially within any time frame in which it could be valuable.

Instead of sheltering teachers from inappropriate workloads, one of the most important goals of the Resident Educator program, the work now required by the program actually takes time away from their classroom.

Please believe me when I tell you, this well-intentioned program is now helping to drive great young teachers right out of the profession. Recruiting and retaining good teachers is increasingly challenging. Ensuring that these highly qualified teachers want to stay in this business is an important outcome. As we fully implement Ohio's New Learning Standards, with their increased rigor and depth, the quality of our instructional staff is more critical than ever.

There is a way to help new teachers. The teachers who have been through the complete Resident Educator program say the greatest value is in the first two years, when they are heavily interacting with principals and their mentors.

Here are recommendations that will strengthen the intent of the program and help new teachers become accomplished educators:

1. Reduce the Resident Educator program to a two-year program, using the ODE as a resource and a support for new teachers and their mentors. Just as school districts now have the responsibility and accountability for ensuring all requirements have been met for professional license renewals, let districts assume the same for Resident Educators. It would increase local control.

2. Use OTES as the method and the mechanism to evaluate new teachers and to help teachers progress to higher levels of teaching excellence. New teachers should be at no less than developing levels during their teaching and mentoring phases. I am aware there is also some discussion in some areas about reducing the amount of time spent with OTES. There would have to be some coordination and streamlining of these two programs.

3. In years three and four, transition teachers to an *Individual Professional Development Plan*. This system is already in place, where teachers and their mentors develop individualized professional growth plans in areas of their specialty, and hours of training, practice and learning are necessary before applying for a licensure, and lastly;

4. Use the Ohio Department of Education as a support and resource, rather than as a regulator, by offering special workshops and training to help new teachers grow and excel in their profession.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by: Dr. Karen Mantia
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