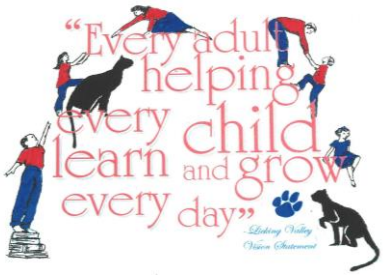
Licking Valley Local School District

1379 Licking Valley Road, N.E. •Newark, OH 43055
740-763-3525 • Fax 740-763-0471
www.edline.net/pages/licking_valley_local_sd

Superintendent David Hile
hiled@lickingvalley.k12.oh.us

Treasurer Jo Lynn Torbert
torbertj@lickingvalley.k12.oh.us



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

Chairman Hayes, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for hearing my proponent testimony on HB 74. If it pleases the Chair, my colleague, Superintendent Brenda Boeke, of Minster Local Schools, and I will offer shared testimony and then take questions together after we have both testified.

I want to thank Vice-Chair Brenner for putting forward this much needed legislative proposal. For the past several weeks, since PARCC testing began, Ohio schools have experienced a level of unprecedented chaos leading to an unprecedented loss of instructional time, so thank you Vice-Chair Brenner for having the courage to address this critically important issue.

I will strive to make three concise points:

First, HB 74 requires ODE to compile, by March 1, 2016, a list of multiple assessments that are equivalent to the end-of-course examinations for use by school districts instead of the end-of-course examinations. This will allow school districts to choose assessments that best meet their needs. This approach, I believe, is the key to resolving almost all of Ohio's current testing issues. Currently, one of the highest stakes assessments we are giving to our children is the Third Grade Reading Guarantee assessment. This same approach has been utilized successfully in third grade since the beginning of the Guarantee. ODE has compiled a list of vendor-approved assessments that districts can choose from, administer to their students and the data is reported to ODE. They have done the exact same thing for gifted identification. My proposal is to expand the approach K-12 and get ODE out of the business of creating assessments, which is very difficult to do because it is a science in and of itself, and which simply get layered on top of the assessments districts are already purchasing and administering for local diagnostic purposes, creating the testing redundancy we are now experiencing.

I don't know if legislators are aware that the vast majority of school districts in Ohio are purchasing, with local general fund dollars, high-quality, Ohio Learning Standards aligned, computer-based, adaptive assessments, such as the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests and STAR, by Renaissance Learning, and administering these nationally norm referenced, highly valid and reliable assessments, that include growth measures, to their students three times per year because we have never been able to use the state assessment data, which we get back after the school year is over, to inform instruction and guide learning.

Over 300 Ohio school districts are currently purchasing and using MAP. A significant number of the remaining 200+ are using STAR and/or Terra Nova. With MAP, for example, we get student scores back immediately upon their completion of the assessment, and a whole suite of data and instructional prescriptions for each student within 48 hours. At Licking Valley we also use MAP for local kindergarten readiness assessment purposes, the state required Third Grade Reading assessment and gifted identification. We also use MAP for Response to Intervention assessment and progress monitoring, and as an indicator of possible learning disabilities. We use the state test data for none of these purposes! So the state is spending millions on state developed tests and their administration, which yield poor and untimely results, and the districts are spending hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars to give highly reliable assessments with timely, useful data. For years now, I have wondered aloud why we don't do what Rep. Brenner is proposing in HB 74; why doesn't ODE identify these high-quality, research vetted, Ohio Learning Standards aligned assessments appropriate for each grade band and let districts choose which ones to use, and then require them to report the data to ODE where the data can be linked across assessments with concordance tables that already exist for many of these vendor-approved assessments.

This approach would solve all of our current testing problems, including:

- too many tests;
- too much time testing;
- too much time spent preparing for state tests;
- increased stress on students and parents;
- millions of tax dollars spent on testing and testing redundancy;
- educators' time wasted on testing redundancy.

Districts across the state are already giving these assessments three times per year, they are just a part of what we do, there is no test prep, and students, teachers and parents care about the results because they understand the results and what they mean, and if they don't, they can come to us for informed answers. According to NWEA, there are several states, all western states, considering implementing this very idea.

Second, this solution can work K-12, and I now want to address the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provisions of HB 74. Let's extend this same concept to kindergarten readiness. Require ODE to make the KRA one option for kindergarten readiness assessment and give districts the choice to use other valid and reliable assessments. HB 74 already requires "the Department of Education to identify and approve at least two assessments that can be used for multiple purposes" with the intent of reducing redundancy and giving districts local control over selecting assessments. I propose that the KRA, the KRA-L and other nationally norm referenced assessments, such as MAP, be options available to districts for assessing kindergarten readiness. There was a recent research study completed at The Ohio State University on the effectiveness of the KRA-L for predicting kindergartners' future reading success in third grade (http://news.ehe.osu.edu/2014/05/05/kindergarten-test-reveals-likely-3rd-grade-readers/). The researchers found that the KRA-L test is a very good indicator of who will be reading proficient in third grade. This research was published just a few weeks before ODE had made the decision to abandon the KRA-L and implement the KRA.
The KRA-L, as compared to the KRA, is significantly more efficient to administer to students at the beginning of their kindergarten year.

Reducing administration of the KRA to one hour, although better than what occurred this year, still means that a teacher with 22 kindergarteners will spend almost 22 hours assessing her students because the KRA is largely a 1:1 test administration; all of that to get irrelevant and inaccurate results. We have 6 years of MAP data that tell us that between 30 and 50% of our kindergartners come to school the first day lacking the skills they need for kindergarten, yet the 2014 KRA told us that only ONE of our students lacked those skills.

Finally, I want to make a strong and clear statement of my support, my teachers' support, my administrators' support and our School Boards' support for Ohio's new learning standards. These are world-class academic standards that we have spent millions of dollars and countless hours implementing, they need to remain in place and they are not contributing to the chaos I mentioned when I began my testimony. This is something that we've gotten right, so let's not regress in this important area.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

David Hile
Superintendent, LVLS