



Worthington City Schools

Testimony in Support of House Bill 591

House Education and Career Readiness Committee

Tuesday, December 4, 2018 | 4:00 pm

Chairman Brenner and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of important legislation that can help provide clarity for our parents and community members across the state.

My name is Neil Gupta, and I serve as the Director of Secondary Education for Worthington City Schools. I also represent our middle and high school principals across the State through my position as Supervisor-At-Large on the Board of Directors for the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators. I've been a district administrator for the past 13 years in three public schools in Ohio and have volunteered my time serving on the OASSA Board of Directors for the past 10 years.

In my role as a district administrator, it is my job, along with my colleagues, each summer to begin reviewing the state assessment results and analyze them to determine our strengths and areas for improvement by our various schools across the district. We use these results to monitor the work of our building and district continuous improvement plans as well as review our teacher professional learning programming.

Based on the various indicators and numerous measures, our district leaders review data ranging from kindergarten readiness and early literacy to post-secondary success, including college courses and the Advanced Placement exams. We not only look at our achievement in each area, but we also focus on the growth over time. In addition, we dissect the results to not only celebrate our areas of success but consider achievement and progress measures by various subgroups, including special education, minority status, and economically disadvantaged.

As a public institution, we realize the need for statewide accountability to ensure high quality learning is occurring in our schools. In spite of receiving the results months after testing, we use the information, in conjunction with our other internal measures, to monitor progress and address needs to promote success for all students.

In order to summarize this information, the current Report Card was created to communicate the results to educators, parents, and community members. At first blush, it may make sense to assign letter grades to each of the components, similar to a child's report card. Yet, summarizing a complex array of data for each of the data sets into a singular letter creates more problems than less.



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For example, in Worthington City Schools, we received a “B” Letter Grade in our Gap Closing component, a measure to determine the achievement levels in our nine subgroups. To be exact, we received an 89.9%. At first glance, it would appear that we missed it by 0.1% from an “A”. In reviewing the data, you need to dig into the nine subgroups based on three different measures, Math, English Language Arts, and Graduation. For English Language Arts, we met all 9 goals for each of the subgroups. For Math, we also met all 9 goals. And, even for Graduation, we met all 9 goals. So, under the first set of rules, we met all 9 goals for each of the 3 measures; we met 27 out of 27 goals, an “A+”. Yet, hidden in the fine print, there’s a one letter grade demotion if a subgroup, although it may meet the measure by the first rules, doesn’t achieve above 60%. Are you confused yet? Well, one of our subgroups, although they met the initial goal, received a 59.3%. So, because that subgroup rose from the previous year and met the initial goal but missed the 60% threshold by 0.7%, we were automatically dropped to a “B”. Try explaining that to parents, community members, and even our educators who work hard everyday for our students.

Another example that reveals the confusing nature of the letter grades was within our K-3 Literacy Measure, in which Worthington City Schools received a “C”. Please know that we understand the need to measure and monitor early literacy, as we know its importance for future success. But, the letter grade misleads the true results and story of our progress. The K-3 Literacy measure is based on our success in improving our K-3 at-risk readers. Based on an “A-F” grade scale, a “C” denotes the sense of average or “middle”. With over 800 3rd grade students, a “C” implies we are meeting the needs of roughly half or even somewhere between 70-79.9% of our students in preparing them to enter 4th grade.

Yet, despite all of the confusing data sets to work through the K-3 Literacy Measure which information about “Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans” and determining how many students were and were not “On Track”, it’s important to note that 99.4% of our third grade students “Met” the Third Grade Reading requirements to be promoted to 4th grade. So, in spite of all the data and metrics, although only 0.6% of our third grade students did not meet the requirements to be promoted to 4th grade, we have to explain to our community how that equates to a “C”.

As we continue to share the story about our schools with our communities, it’s important they we provide clear information that shouldn’t be simplified. Due to contrary opinion, the current method is not intuitive, not honest, and does create more confusion than helping to clearly communicate a district’s status. It is our hope that you will be in support of HB 591 that eliminates letter grades in our report cards by replacing them with understandable, transparent, and “parent-centric” information. On behalf of Worthington City Schools and the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, we strongly support HB 591 to provide clarity for our parents and community members across the state.



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Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this vital matter.

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Director of Secondary Education