Senate Education Committee

Testimony on SB 216

Presented by Sara Roseberry

December 13, 2017

Chairperson Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding the elimination of the KRA. My name is Sara Roseberry. I have been an Elementary Principal for 8 years, taught English Language Arts for eleven years, and served as school counselor for five years. In these roles, I have had the opportunity to see the effects of literacy instruction at all grade levels and from various socioeconomic backgrounds. I am here to represent Hardin Houston Local School along with the other Shelby County districts that share similar concerns.

I would like to begin by stating that we fully support the use of a standardized, evidence-based assessment at the beginning of kindergarten to provide instructional information for each student. The KRA, however, has limitations that make it an imperfect tool.

First, the very nature of the KRA’s design, which allows the administrator to develop an intimate bond with and understanding of each student, also takes away from the time to develop classroom unity and begin the instructional process. Districts with limited resources cannot provide the additional personnel or extended days to complete the battery outside of normal classroom time like some of the larger districts. The design of the KRA takes away from, rather than adds to, the instruction of our students.

Secondly, as much of the testimony presented to you has confirmed, the KRA is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood educational programs. There is significant data to support the reality of summer slide. True evaluation of preschool programs is best completed at the end of the preschool year not the beginning of Kindergarten.

Thirdly, while the tablet/computer sections make the assessment quicker to administer some of the items, it also frequently causes technological difficulties with freezing of the screen being the predominant problem.

Finally, and most importantly, we have not found the KRA to be a good indicator for the third grade-reading guarantee. Our teachers have found that other assessments are much more reliable. An example of this is the limited areas of rhyming, letter names, and letter sounds. Some students can get “lucky” if the letters are included in their first name. Our teachers administer the KRA because it is required, but they use other assessment data to drive instructional decisions, prepare for interventions, determine Title 1 services, and form learning center groups. As such, kindergarten students receive too much assessment and too little instruction at the most critical time of the year. The fact that our teachers do not find the data from the KRA worth the time to look at, much less to analyze, seems a clear indicator that its administration is a waste of precious time and resources. Likewise, unlike Ohio State Tests and other approved diagnostics, there is never a follow-up standardized assessment for comparison purposes. This is another primary reason we administer additional assessments. We need to have an instrument that can evaluate the effectiveness of our programming and our strategies.

In closing, while we have grown to appreciate and value a system of assessment and accountability, we sincerely hope for a better alternative to the KRA.