**Testimony on Administration KRA as a Portion of Senate Bill 216**

Senate Education Committee, Peggy Lehner – Chair

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**Introduction**

Good morning, Chair Lehner, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Brett Halsey and I am currently in my third year as elementary principal at Hardin Northern Elementary School. Before beginning this role I was a kindergarten teacher for 6 years at Franklin Elementary in Delphos in the Delphos City School District. As a kindergarten teacher I was involved in the transition from the KRAL test to the KRA in the 2014-2015 school year. As elementary principal I continue to work closely with the teaching staff to administer the KRA.

**Teacher Perspective**

In order to roll out the KRA in 2014-2015 every kindergarten teacher in the State of Ohio had to complete two days of training. After completing the training I conducted the first round of testing. Based upon the results of the KRA as a kindergarten teacher, I found the following differences between the 2 tests and the subsequent deficiencies in the current KRA:

* The KRA took a lot more time to give then the KRAL with very limited information gained from the additional testing time. In fact, the KRA test takes so much time that I could not complete it during two testing days (30 to 40 minute blocks of time). This resulted in the loss of a lot of instructional time with students to complete the remaining items.
* The test does did not go deep enough for me to properly assess my students’ educational levels in order to develop proper reading and math plans.
  + Even though the test took twice as long to give it gave me half the information I needed to begin working with my students. The KRAL assessment gave us better working information
  + The tests covers so many areas that provides minimal, surface-level information about students
  + I still had to give a locally developed assessment so I could gauge my students’ reading readiness in letter recognition, sound recognition, initial sounds, sound segmentation and word recognition
  + This testing took additional time before I could start working one on one with my students
  + The testing procedure was frustrating and I felt it was unnecessarily burdensome on myself and my colleagues and negatively impacted student progress

**Administrator Perspective**

* After completing the first round and being part of the assessment in my current role I have come to the following conclusions:
  + The KRA has been rolled out by ODE as a kindergarten readiness assessment. It is given at the beginning of the kindergarten experience, the students are already in kindergarten so it doesn’t matter if they aren’t ready for kindergarten. We are not going to send them home. The additional time it takes to administer this KRA testing instrument takes away instructional time and does not provide teachers with any more information then shorter instruments or simply classroom observations can give to them.
  + The KRA looks at behaviors and socialization. We do not need to have someone tell us how our students are doing in these areas. We work with them every day. We know what social and behavioral issues they are having and we work with those students’ social skills in a holistic way.
  + Teaching children social skills and how to operate in a school building is one of the most important things we do as a kindergarten teacher and every teacher I know at the kindergarten level works on these skills every day.
  + This test seemed to be designed as a tool to gather student information through a research project sponsored by John Hopkins University. The test is a scientific test but is not at all useful for a kindergarten teacher.
  + We as a team never used the data in Delphos and we do not spend time looking at the data at Hardin Northern. We use our locally designed tests as well as Aimsweb to assess our students in depth so we know where each student stands academically so we can begin to plan our instruction.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion the KRA has not been an effective test for me as a teacher or for us as a district in gauging our students’ academic readiness.

* It does not matter what social issues students have coming into school because it is our job as kindergarten teachers and as districts to teach children social skills, coping skills and developmentally appropriate behaviors.
* The test takes too much time to administer and does not give enough valuable information to constitute the large amounts of time it takes to give the KRA assessment. Time would be better used to gather targeted information to better plan instruction for our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.