



EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date Dec. 11, 2017

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Organization Representing: Liberty-Benton Local School

Testifying on Bill Number: 214

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: Would like to testify
with my principal, Brian
Burkett, if at all possible

Testimony on Eliminating the KRA Provision of Senate Bill 216
Ohio Senate Education Committee Senator Lehner, Chair
Ronda Smith, Literacy Coach
Liberty-Benton School District, Findlay, Ohio
December 13, 2017

Chairman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the elimination of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) within Senate Bill 216. My name is Ronda Smith and I am the literacy coach at Liberty-Benton Elementary in Hancock County. I have taught for 20 years; 16 years as a first-grade teacher and 4 years as a literacy coach for grades K-5. I hold a K-8 Elementary Bachelor degree from The University of Toledo and Master of Arts in Education with a reading and administration certificate from The University of Findlay. I am also a graduate of the 2013 Academy for Literacy Coaches from The Ohio State University. I am a Martha Holding Jennings Scholar. I have completed the Hancock Leadership Program through the Chamber of Commerce. I am a member of the Kappa Delta Gamma.

I would like to share with the committee on how we are using the KRA in our district and why I support the elimination of KRA.

In my testimony, I will address the reasons that I feel the KRA should not be given to kindergarten students and why I feel the elimination of the KRA will benefit our teachers as well as our students.

In our district, we give the KRA toward the end of September. We feel giving the KRA at the beginning of the year is an unfair assessment to our students. Our teachers, at this point in the school year, do not know the students and our students do not yet know their teachers, routines, or the school surroundings. Some of our students have never been in a classroom before or away from their parents. We believe it is important for our students to get to know our teachers, establish a routine, and learn the expectations of kindergarten. Our teachers need to form a relationship with our students and build a good rapport, which are key components in our school district.

Our teachers believe that a balanced literacy approach is the correct means to instruct reading. Our teachers believe that organizing students into guided reading groups based on student needs is essential for our foundation of reading. The KRA does not provide data to help group our students on skills. It is our goal to establish a balanced literacy approach in our classroom as we teach and show our students the routine of stations. However, in order to complete the KRA on time, the teachers have to give up instructional time to assess our students. We believe that the best person to assess the kindergarten students is our kindergarten teachers. Our district allows subs to be brought in for our kindergarten teachers. Our teachers, in turn, have to spend time developing plans for these subs to come in as they are out assessing. While students are being assessed one on one with the classroom teacher, the remaining students are being supervised by yet another new person when they are just trying to get comfortable with their new teacher. Kindergarten teachers are given two days to complete the KRA. Our kindergarten teachers call each student out in the hall to assess them. We feel the assessment is too long for a kindergarten student so we complete at one time, therefore we have students complete only one section at a time. Our teachers do not have enough time to complete the observation part of the KRA, therefore they have to spend class time doing it. It also takes our kindergarten teachers a long time to input the data in the system. This is done outside of class time. My teachers would rather spend time preparing instructional tools rather than inputting data into a system that they will not use again for the rest of the year. This assessment takes time out of our instruction to assess students at the beginning of the year. This assessment does not give us any details to use to further our instruction with students.

It is stated on the ODE website that the KRA is a tool that teachers use to get to know their students. I disagree with this statement. I can't believe that spending 45 min with a student before school or like us, having to interrupt instruction at the end of September, gives the teacher more knowledge about a student than just teaching. We sometimes take for granted that giving teachers time to instruct, observe, and interact will tell our teachers more about the student than an assessment like KRA. I have a hard time believing that the data that we gain from this assessment helps guide a teacher's instruction for the rest of the year. We do not receive any data from this assessment. For example, I handed each of my teachers the parent reports to pass out at conference time as well as a data sheet that I created to tell the teacher if they passed or failed. I remember one of my teachers this year said, "before you hand me that I bet you I can tell you who did not pass in my classroom." The point of this is, she didn't need to complete the KRA to know that one of her students did not pass the

social component of the KRA. This teacher knew this by observing and interacting with her students. I believe that this KRA does nothing for our kindergarten teachers but waste their time. The time that is crucial in a classroom with more rigorous instruction, more demanding expectations, and a higher level thinking.

The following statement is stated in the ODE, "the KRA is an assessment designed to see if students are ready for Kindergarten." I reflect back on this statement and ask myself ready for kindergarten? The students are already enrolled in kindergarten. We can not reverse that. It does not help us after school started to know that a child is not ready for kindergarten. However, not all our students have participated in preschool. Therefore, some of our students do not know all their letters and sounds or can even write their name or hold a pencil. Our district assesses many things during our kindergarten screening in the spring before they enter kindergarten. We use this as our assessment tool and also assess all the letters and sounds that they should know at the beginning of kindergarten. I can give this data to my kindergarten teachers and they are thrilled to know who knows their all their letters or sounds. The KRA only assesses 6 letters and 4 sounds, not enough to give us a true evaluation of what our student knows. Due to the fact that this assessment is not a full representation of what the student knows, we feel it is not a good use of our time or resources. Our district must use assessments such as Star Early by Renaissance or NWEA MAP in order to gain a full understanding of what the students know, and track their growth throughout the school year. This is for both their growth measure and part of the RTI process. My kindergarten teachers like to take the data we know about a student in order to provide the correct interventions that are needed for a student. The KRA test does not give us any useful data to drive instruction based on the needs of the students. Our teachers feel that they cannot see growth with the KRA since it is only given once. We have so many standards and want to use our time efficiently. We feel the time, energy and money would be better spent using an assessment that gives a more accurate picture of our students that is used more than once. Therefore, our teachers would rather use a vendor assessment like Star Early or MAP in order to gain information about our students rather than a one time test like KRA. We feel that these assessments, like Star Early, are also a tool for our teachers and as well as something that we can reassess as the students make growth throughout the year. Teachers are able to print reports from the vendor assessment that can group students based on their needs. Teachers are even able to use these assessments each month if needed. Using these vendor assessments allows our teachers to reassess a student multiple times over the

years, not just once like the KRA is designed. The KRA lacks a post-assessment - a follow-up assessment to do at the end of the year.

When I look at the KRA data for our district, I have analyzed a few things that I would like to share. Our district utilizes a multi-criteria in order to determine if a child is on track or off track. The following 3 assessments are used - KRA data, Star Early, and letter and sound data.

KRA Data 2017-2018 *# of students who passed	Star Early data 2017-2018 (vendor assessment): * # of students who were on track (25th percentile or above)	Letter/Sound KDG assessment (District Created) *# of students who were on track (Title 1 Criteria)	# Students who we placed on a RIMP using multicriteria
KS - 20/21	KS - 18/21	KS -12/21- L 5/21- S	KS - 16/21
KB - 19/22	KB - 18/22	KB -10/22 - L 3/22 - S	KB - 16/22
KG - 22/22	KG - 20/22	KG -13/22 - L 5/22 - S	KG - 15/22
KH - 19/21	KH - 17/21	KH -10/21 - L 5/21 - S	KH - 15/21
KJ - 19/22	KJ - 19/22	KJ - 10/22 - L 3/22 - S	KJ - 16/21

<p>99/108 = 91% of our students passed the KRA</p> <p>*A score of 263 and above indicates ON TRACK for meeting the THIRD GRADE READING GUARANTEE.</p>	<p>92/108 = 85% of our students are on track</p> <p>15% of our students are not on track</p>	<p>Letters -</p> <p>55/108 = 51% of our students knew their letters</p> <p>Sounds -</p> <p>21/108 = 20% of our students knew their sounds</p>	<p>78/108 = 72% of our students are not on a Reading Improvement Plan</p> <p>28% of our students are on a Reading Improvement Plan</p>
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Facts about the data above

- If I only used the KRA for on track and not on track students, I would be missing 21 of our students. The KRA only identified 9 students in my district as being not on track.

The reason I feel that the KRA does not benefit any of our administration, teachers, parents or student.

1. KRA is designed as an assessment that is only given one time. There is no post assessment in order to see growth throughout the year.
2. KRA data does not provide enough information in order to determine if a student is on track or not on track for particular skills.
3. Parents are given a score telling them if they are emerging, approaching or demonstrating. There are no detailed explanations on what the scores mean to the parent or areas of need for that students. Parents cannot use this assessment to reinforce skills that the child might be lacking.
4. KRA takes time out of the beginning of the school year. Teachers have to assess all the questions on a one-to-one basis, this takes time out of our instruction.
5. If the assessment is given at the beginning of school, the students are unfamiliar with the teacher and the school environment. This can cause anxiety and unnecessary stress for students.
6. After completing the KRA, my teachers do not feel that the data is relevant to their assessment of the students. It also does not drive our instruction for the rest year. It does not identify if a student is on track or not on track.

7. The KRA database is not user-friendly and can be very time-consuming for our kindergarten teachers to submit the data. Once the data is reported, the parent reports take an exorbitant amount of time to print.

8. As a literacy coach, the KRA is not useful because it is time-consuming, data is not relevant, and it is a one-time test. Our teachers do not gain anything from the results or use the result throughout the year.

9. This assessment is to assess if the students were prepared or ready for kindergarten. I would rather see time, effort, and money spent to enforce the need for all students to participate in preschool. Being prepared to know the basic fundamental skills of prekindergarten will benefit our students in kindergarten.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my views on KRA. I hope that when you are reflecting on what I said you can come to the conclusion to keep the provision inside SB216 to eliminate the KRA as a required assessment and allow local school districts the opportunity to make their own decisions on what assessment will benefit their students.