

2 June 2019

Proponent of HB 239

Good evening, Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Mandy Wagner and I am here to share with you why I am in support of HB 239. I am sharing with you my rationale not only as a classroom teacher from the Canton City School District, but also as a parent of three, school-aged daughters.

In my 18 years as a teacher, I have had the unique opportunity to teach the full spectrum of my 7-12 certification. When I began teaching, students in high school were required to take and pass the 9th grade proficiency tests. These test were more broad in assessment scope: citizenship, math, reading, writing, and science. In 2005, OGTs were the new standardized tests and were still relatively broad in scope: reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. With the new format, however, there was a lot of stress that was being felt. A lot of unease about this transition. Test prep books were bought and quickly filled my shelves. Curriculum was revamped to help empower our students to become “OGT Ready.” I did the work to prepare my students for success on the test and, to their credit, by year two of the test, my department’s scores were in the 90% passing rate. But the following year, another test was being introduced in the 7th grade, a writing test.

Administration decided to move me from 10th grade English to 7th grade to assist the team in preparing these young writers for this new assessment. It was a tough move. The rationale for plucking teachers from the content and curriculum in which they’re most comfortable was all test driven. Again, to our credit, we made it happen. In year two of the 7th grade writing test, our students achieved an over 90% passing rate again.

On paper, all of this seems like best practices. Move your strong teachers to get those scores up. But as the years have continued to progress, our state's reliance on standardized test data to hold districts "accountable" for good teaching has gotten out of hand. Currently, beginning in grade 3, students are testing every single year, and every test that is given is two parts. And this is just the actual tests for the state. This doesn't count the diagnostic tests students take to assess their readiness, SLOs they need to take for non-tested courses to assess yearly growth (and hold those teachers accountable), then there's the SAT, ACT, as well as the run of the mill tests a student can expect to take that is written and assessed by the classroom teacher.

To give you an idea of how much testing we're doing this year in my building, I have included our testing calendar for the month of April. In this document, on April 9th, we began officially administering Ohio's end of course exams. In the meantime, we were also giving end of the year MAP tests (our district's adopted diagnostic test), SLO tests (for teachers of non-tested subject areas), and the SAT make up test. For four weeks, almost an entire month, there was not one day that I had a full, uninterrupted instructional day with my sophomores. When we finally returned to a regular school day after the testing haze, I had three weeks with them to get them ready for their final exam. I hadn't seen them in a month! To articulate how difficult it was to regain the learning momentum... I do not have the words. And please understand, members of this committee, this is a window of only one round of testing that I am sharing with you. On the second submitted document to you entitled "Testing Schedule for 2018-2019," you can see that we teachers lost precious instructional days every month due to testing, with the exception of November and January. My colleagues and I sat down with our calendars one dreary day in the winter and calculated that, in the English department alone, we lost over 40 instructional days due to testing. This does not count days of instruction lost due to other high school requisites like

guidance counselor visits, scheduling, one-to-one device dispersion and recollection, picture day, etc. How can a teacher, or even a student, get any momentum going with constant interruptions like this? And truly, this is just the tip of the iceberg (forgive the cliché).

It is not just the instructional days that we lose that is adding to the academic crisis, but the tests themselves. I have worked with my students for decades and have seen these tests become more and more complex. My students are bright. They can learn! But these tests are not designed with my learners in mind. How many times have I worked through a released practice test with my students to walk them through the process and give them a taste of what will be expected of them, to have several of them stop the process to ask me what a word means. As soon as I define the word for them, every TIME they have said, “Oh! Then the answer is this,” and they are right. A 2014 article in *Psychology Today* reported on the work of Dr. Anne Fernald, a psychology professor at Stanford University who discovered the language gap between rich and poor children emerges during infancy. “By age three, it is believed that children growing up in poor neighborhoods or from lower-income families may hear up to 30 million fewer words than their more privileged counterparts.” My students know the material. They can answer the questions, if only the tests were structured in a way and in a language more familiar to them.

I could honestly speak to this topic all day. I haven’t even mentioned that my students take these high stakes tests on iPads, iPads with no keyboards to facilitate the multi-paragraph essays (plural) they are required to compose as a means to their graduation. Or how these compositions are assessed by computers and not actual human beings.

As a teacher dedicated to my profession, I have done all that is within my power to prepare myself so I may prepare my students for success on these tests. I am a member of the 7th

grade ELA Content Advisory Committee that works with ODE, the Office of Curriculum and Assessment, and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to review and evaluate test questions and related test materials. I have done this work for two years to get in on the ground floor to help guide what these tests look like. I wanted and needed to understand at all levels the inner workings of these tests. After preparing and proctoring the tests, I wait for months for results to be released, so I can look at the data and assess strengths and weaknesses; the problem is, we have no access to test questions. We can't even legally discuss the test with our students to gather feedback or data to better prepare them for these high stakes tests. Truly, I feel like every thing I have done this year has revolved around test taking. (a summation of administration's directives):

“Look at last year's ELA I data so you know where your students' shortcomings are and you can guide your instruction accordingly. We know you have no idea what questions were asked of them nor what their responses were or even why they responded the way they did, but do your best. Also, give this MAP test at three different points of the school year, sacrificing four instructional days at each point so you can have a better idea of your students' test readiness. Also (again), those who didn't pass last year's tests will have to retake them in December. More instructional days lost, but we got to get them over the finish line. Then we will test them on your subject matter through the entire month of April, and I know you have lost 45 days of instruction with them just on testing alone, but we need you and your students to not burn out, close that vocabulary gap, learn those writing skills, keep that momentum going, and make this happen, or there could be a state takeover of our district.”

It's too much.

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Canton City has amazing students. Canton City has amazing teachers. We need more time to learn, more time to teach. We can get them where they need to be, but we must reduce testing. It's time to have districts examine their testing practices and devote more time to precious learning. Students cannot be successful if they're constantly tested on material they never had time to learn, process, and retain. This bill must pass. Ohio's teachers and students need you to support it.

Thank you.

Testing Schedule for 2018-2019

Test	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Pre-K thru Grade 2												
KRA - Lang & Literacy, Social Foundations, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, & Physical Well-being	20-31	1-30	1-31									
AIM only-KRA Lang & Literacy, Social Foundations, Math, Science, Social Studies, & Physical Well-being	13-31	1-30	22-31									
MAP Diagnostic 1	20-31	1-14										
MAP Diagnostic 1 (AIM Academy only)	6-24											
CogAt (Grade 2)		15-26										
MAP Diagnostic 2 (including AIM)					3-21							
OELPA - As applicable							4-28	1-29				
MAP Diagnostic 3 (including AIM)									8-30			
Grades 3 thru 5												
MAP Diagnostic 1	20-31	1-14										
MAP Diagnostic 1 (AIM Academy only)	6-24											
CogAt (Grade 5)		15-23										
State Online Test (AIR) - Reading (Grade 3)		24-30										
MAP Diagnostic 2 (including AIM)					3-21							
OELPA - As applicable							4-28	1-29				
Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) - As applicable							18-28	1-31	1-12			
MAP Diagnostic 3 (including AIM)									8-30			
State Online Tests (AIR) - English/Language Arts (all grades)									1-23			
State Online Tests (AIR) - Mathematics (all grades) and Science (5)									15-30	1-7		
MAP Diagnostic (Grade 3)											8-12	
State Online Tests (AIR) - Reading (Grade 3)												8-12
Grades 6 thru 8												
MAP Diagnostic 1	20-31	1-14										
MAP Diagnostic 1 (AIM Academy only)	6-24											
PSAT (Grade 8)			11									
MAP Diagnostic 2 (including AIM)					3-21							
OELPA - As applicable							4-28	1-29				
Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) - As applicable							18-28	1-31	1-12			
MAP Diagnostic 3 (including AIM)									8-30			
State Online Tests (AIR) - English/Language Arts (all grades)									1-23			
State Online Tests (AIR) - Mathematics (all grades) and Science (8)									15-30	1-7		
Grades 9 thru 12												
PSAT (Grades 10 & 11)			10									
PSAT (Grade 9)			11									
MAP Diagnostic 1												
State Online Tests (AIR) - End of course make-ups	20-31	1-14			3-21							15-26
SAT: State Funded (Grade 11)												
MAP Diagnostic 2					3-21							
OELPA - As applicable							4-28	1-29				
Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (AASCD) - As applicable							18-28	1-31	1-12			
MAP Diagnostic 3									8-30			
State Online Tests (AIR) - English/Languages Arts (Eng I & II) (grades 9 & 10)									1-23			
State Online Tests (AIR) - Mathematics (Alg I/Geo) Social St (Am. Hist./Am. Govt.) Science (Biology)									15-30	1-7		

All OGT tests are strictly for non-grads and will be administered on demand up to 3 times a year.

Updated 11/8/2018