

To The Ohio Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Joan Spoerl and I am an early childhood professional and former teacher, proud resident of Cleveland Heights and parent of a 10th grader at Heights High School who has attended our public schools since kindergarten. Thank you for allowing me to testify about the state report cards.

My husband and I attended public schools and between us have received undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate education at Stanford University, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois Champaign, Northwestern University and Tufts University. We know about and value quality education. We've been blessed to work with a vast array of wonderful people as we support efforts to improve our public schools and uplift all children using them.

I share our founding fathers' convictions about education's importance to the preservation of our democracy and our republic and John Adams' vision of a system so grand "that it is unknown to any other people ancient or modern" and that "knowledge must become so general as to raise the lower ranks of Society to the higher." I, like them, believe in advancing the common good.

My community's schools are not failing or poor performing as suggested by what is an inaccurate and misleading report card with its inappropriate use of standardized test scores to grade schools and school systems. I believe that our state policies are failing my community's children and families.

When I consider the revision of the state's school report cards, I believe that any system of holding schools accountable should:

- If using standardized tests, only use the best assessments that are actually meaningful and inform teaching, with results provided in a timely manner (for example, periodic quizzes can actually serve to teach and improve children's retention of information).
- Have developmentally appropriate expectations that foster developmentally appropriate practice (see more below about the early childhood grades – pre-k through 3rd grade)
- Never be punitive, as they currently are, punishing children and communities who need the most support
- Never be used in such a way that might harm a child or weaken community cohesion
- Never result in money being diverted away from a public school district in need of greater investment and support, but rather be used to fuel further investment in professional development, coaching, more critical staff to uplift children and their communities.
- Foster approaches that feed children's innate curiosity
- Value diversity in a community and in school communities
- Result in supportive, positive and collaborative work between the state and the community to explore and enact the best educational practices
- Recognize that the research now definitively shows that money matters as Bruce Baker, a leading school finance scholar discovered in his review of all relevant studies. The amount a district spends per pupil results in improved outcomes for students.
- Consider the state's own performance in reducing inequality and inequity, eliminating child poverty, food insecurity, lead poisoning, infant mortality, fully meeting its constitutional mandate to fully and fairly fund public schools statewide, etc. Perhaps offer

a mirroring grade that reflects back upon the state and the role it plays in why a particular school or system may be struggling in various areas and act to address the challenges.

As an early childhood professional, I'd like to see the report card assess the use of developmentally appropriate practices as delineated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and measure whether or not a school district has robust classroom and school libraries, whether its pre-K through grade 3 classrooms have: large sets of wooden unit blocks and other enriching materials with which children engage daily in play-based, hands-on and academically enriching practices; offer daily recess and other optimal brain-building activities and resources.

I implore you to measure what matters to the vast majority(90%) of Ohio's children who attend public schools, their families and communities, to the preservation of our democratic republic, to national education practitioners, researchers and experts and to advance the common good and Ohio's future workforce.

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Cleveland Heights, Ohio

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