



Senate Education Committee
SB 168 Testimony

West Clermont School District, Clermont County

Natasha L. Adams, Chief Executive Officer & Superintendent

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 168.

My name is Natasha Adams and I serve as the Superintendent and CEO of West Clermont School District, the more recent Cupp report ranks us as the 22nd largest in Ohio, serving approximately 8,200 students. In my 26th year in education, I have also served as a coach, teacher, middle school assistant principal, principal, and executive director of teaching and learning.

West Clermont School District is located at the "east gate" of Cincinnati. It's known for being modern-rural with a blend of rural, urban and suburban communities. Just seven years ago we merged two high schools into one large school and two middle schools merged as well, creating nine district schools. We are a district on the RISE with increased academic performance, a steadily growing diverse population, and state-of-the-art facilities in most of our buildings.

Providing a high-quality educator in every classroom is vital to the success of any school district. In order to do this, a robust locally driven evaluation and feedback system is vital. Therefore, we ask the Senate to support Senate Bill 168.

As educators, we will meet and most often exceed any standard that is set for us as professionals. The current standards that are measured in the OTES 2.0 framework represent high-quality teaching. The move in the most recent changes to integrate the use of data and assessment as part of the broader conversation about teacher practice is a step in the right direction to make evaluation more meaningful for both the teacher and the evaluator. However, the framework still treats all educators the same in terms of what they need to grow and develop, regardless of their experience and expertise.

Flexibility to design our own framework for teacher evaluation would bring us a huge step forward in making the evaluation process part of the work we do in our schools every day rather than something that happens in pre-determined evaluation moments that often feel like a disruption to the work. Allowing districts to develop their own framework would mean:



- **OTES Rubric** - Any evaluation standards and priorities would continue to reflect what we know about highly effective teaching. Teachers want feedback that is specific and designed to help them continue to excel in their practice or deepen their expertise. Any framework that a district uses will be designed to look for and grow teaching practices that lead to improved student outcomes. The current rubric within the OTES framework is built on these practices; however, the current rubric is so large and comprehensive that it is difficult for an evaluator to fairly evaluate 30+ teachers in every area of the rubric in any given cycle.
- **Goal Setting and Improvement Plans** - Goal setting and improvement plans in the current framework are intended to be aligned with district and building priorities. On a practical level, no matter how well-intentioned and aligned a system is, the current framework often results in the work on those goals being separated from classroom observation rather than being the driver for conversation. This often means that teachers get little feedback about their progress on those goals, checking only once or twice during the year. Conversely, teachers that are following an Improvement Plan often have goals that are focused in one or two areas, while also receiving feedback about their teaching in other areas of the OTES rubric. This can lead to misalignment and challenges in knowing where to focus improvement efforts for teachers who need support. Allowing local districts to establish an evaluation framework that more fully integrates goal setting and measuring progress on goals as part of the key indicators of effective teaching would provide new ways to make goal setting and focused improvement plans more fully integrated into the daily work of teachers.
- **Highly Qualified Student Data** - All educators agree that using data measures to ensure students are growing and achieving within the curriculum is important. The move from Student Learning Objectives (SLO) to Highly Qualified Student Data (HQSD) was applauded by many educators as a move toward using student data in more meaningful ways, particularly with the move away from the 50/50 framework. The ability to collect student data, analyze patterns and trends, and quickly pivot to react to that data is critical for all educators. Many schools are currently relying heavily on commercial assessment systems to generate several data points throughout a year that teachers can use to reflect on and plan further instruction because it is time-consuming and challenging to build local data systems. West Clermont has made an investment in supporting teachers' ability to collect and use meaningful classroom data. More flexibility at a local level in building a framework that incorporates classroom data to inform a teacher's evaluation, goal setting, and instructional planning would be beneficial.
- **Frequency of Evaluation** - Our evaluators take their role in providing meaningful, actionable feedback to teachers very seriously. The time commitment to complete a



full cycle evaluation for each teacher is significant for both the teacher and the evaluator. As our schools continue to experience challenges with staffing shortages, being able to focus that feedback on teachers who need it the most is critical to increase engagement and retention among our teaching staff.

- A locally developed framework would allow West Clermont to balance our current reality with the desire to provide all teachers meaningful feedback to collectively improve our students' experiences in our classrooms.
- We believe the most time should be spent with those that have the most to learn, and providing our most accomplished teachers more flexibility in how and how often they are evaluated would demonstrate respect for their professionalism, allow them to focus on deepening their instructional practices, and reflect a more realistic opportunity to continue to grow in the profession across a teacher's career.

What we would expect to gain from an alternative framework:

- **Deepening Professional Practice** - Teachers who remain in the classroom over their careers develop expertise in many areas and serve as leaders in our school systems. They mentor and grow in formal and informal ways. Teachers who have a record of highly skilled teaching should be provided opportunities to deepen their professional practice and receive feedback from highly skilled peers in ways that the current framework does not provide. West Clermont would welcome the opportunity to develop professional learning pathways for our veteran teachers that are less reliant on the OTES rubric and more reliant on deepening professional practice in an area that will make the learning experiences for our students richer and allow our teachers to grow their leadership capacity from the classroom.
- **Purpose Driven** - West Clermont has invested in developing a clear picture of what we expect for our graduates and staff at all levels through our Portrait of a Graduate, Portrait of an Educator, and Portrait of a Leader. The current framework limits our ability to leverage the work our teachers are doing to develop the Portrait of a Graduate competencies. An alternative framework that provided West Clermont with a way to integrate our Portrait of a Graduate and Portrait of an Educator competencies as the driver for setting goals, measuring our impact, and providing feedback to educators would provide a purpose-driven evaluation system that reflects the needs of our students at West Clermont, as identified by our staff, parents, community, and students. This would ensure evaluation is truly personalized and integrated into every aspect of the work our educators do each day.

Chair Brenner and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.