



# North Ridgeville City Schools

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North Ridgeville City Schools  
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Wednesday, May 5, 2021

To Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB 145), which would make revisions to Ohio's School Report Card. I am Heather Miller, Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction at the North Ridgeville City Schools and a member of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators' report card committee.

Over the past several years, our committee has worked with the Ohio Department of Education, legislators, as well as superintendents and other key district personnel across the state to strengthen the message conveyed by the state report card. Through this experience, it has become apparent that the current report card does not tell the story of each district, nor does it provide an accurate reflection of the achievements each district has made. Unfortunately, SB 145 will not make these necessary improvements to our district report cards either.

I believe that the purpose of the report card is to communicate district progress to stakeholders in a way that aligns with Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education. Through this, the report card should communicate both areas of success and identify areas for improvement. There is a hidden assumption that students in districts across the state enter their educational career at the same level and are provided the same opportunities along the way. The reality is that students do not enter kindergarten at the same level, and students in poorer communities must overcome additional obstacles not present in wealthier communities. This gap only continues to widen each school year due to lack of access and lack of opportunities. Even if you only consider the number of books available in a low income house compared to a high income house, the inequities are striking. Despite these hurdles, school districts across the state are making gains, closing gaps, and preparing our students for high school graduation and beyond. This should be the story told through our district report cards.

By providing an overall letter grade, the current report card does not reward districts for progress or students for growth but instead highlights the inequities that exist. I believe that the report card should measure the improvement that each district makes. The emphasis on achievement data, which research has shown is directly correlated to socio-economic status, does not provide an accurate depiction of how school districts are overcoming obstacles. Even with the inclusion of a growth component, including an overall grade quickly

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separates high achieving from low achieving districts (especially if they are color coded). Moving to a 5-star system would only transfer letter grades to stars, as the perception would remain that a 5-star is an “A”, etc. A 3-star system would further highlight districts in need of support in a negative way that provides a single label quickly associated with success or failure. Instead, the overall rating needs to be eliminated and the focus should be on providing evidence of achievement and growth equally. This would allow districts to emphasize each individual component instead of the overall grade.

SB 145 requires student subgroups to meet both achievement and progress targets to meet expectations in the Gap Closing or Equity component. This is an equity issue; some districts are going to struggle with achievement because of student backgrounds. Despite this, districts are growing students academically and emotionally. We need to celebrate and recognize these accomplishments.

As noted above, SB 145 would change the name of the Gap Closing measure to Equity. If we consider the definition of equity, we must also recognize that districts have different needs. Simply changing the title of this measure will not make strides to move toward equitable opportunities. Measuring districts on the same assessment in the same way and not recognizing the improvements needed is a measure of equality based on opportunity, not equity. To move toward equity, the report card needs to disaggregate for student groups against comparable districts and the state, while also highlighting growth made. Further, some students groups are identified in multiple measures and penalized in multiple areas, while others are not. Moving the “n” size from 20 to 15 will only continue to accentuate the students that are not achieving but are making significant progress, and it would make it easier to identify individual students.

The Prepared for Success component intends to provide information to stakeholders related to efforts above the measured components. In theory, this would begin to paint a better overall picture of district accomplishments and opportunities. Despite this positive intent, because this is a graded measure that includes components to which each district will have varied access, it does not meet its intended purpose. The Prepared for Success component is too subjective and not able to be all encompassing. Therefore, this component should be reported on the report card, but not measured. This allows each individual district to focus on their personal values and highlight what success means to them. In our district, for example, we have one of Ohio’s STEM recognized school buildings. This is an important part of who we are and how we are able to educate many of our students. We would like to acknowledge our community partnerships and provide evidence of the learning opportunities that this school provides for our students in order to demonstrate how this prepares them for future success. This is not reflected in the Prepared for Success component. This component needs to provide insight into the various ways that students demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful beyond high school graduation.

It is my vision that district report cards accurately reflect the opportunities provided for students in an unbiased way. We can level the playing field in a way that accurately depicts the academic achievement of students, the growth made to close the achievement gap, as well as the other ways in which a school district provides educational opportunities to prepare our students for their selected future in a way that is not directly correlated

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to zip code. We have an obligation to accurately reflect the hard work that each district endures to prepare our students for graduation and life beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am glad to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Miller".

Heather Miller, EdD  
Coordinator of Curriculum & Instruction  
North Ridgeville City Schools