

Midview Local School District

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October 23, 2023

Senate Education Committee

Chair, Andrew Brenner

Vice Chair, Sandra O'Brien

Ranking Member, Catherine D. Ingram

Member, Louis, W. Blessing, III

Member, Stephen A. Huffman

Member, Michele Reynolds

Member, Vernon Sykes

Re: Senate Bill 168 Testimony

Senate Education Committee,

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 168. My name is Bruce Willingham and I am the superintendent of the Midview Local School District. I have been pretty active in sharing my personal and professional beliefs with my local legislators, Representative Gayle Manning, Representative Joe Miller, and Senator Nathan Manning. Through my eight years as superintendent for the Midview Local School District, I have been very insistent about including actual practitioners into the discussion when it comes to K-12 education across the state.

I understand the difficult task of setting direction and making decisions that have a profound impact on large numbers of people. I also think our state legislators could benefit from using actual practitioners to help guide the creation of legislation. Not every aspect of K-12 education needs to be controlled by lawmakers. My colleagues and I have extensive experience, training, and advanced degrees that are extremely useful when making decisions that impact areas we serve.

I was interested to read that a possible alternative framework for teacher evaluation is being discussed. The bill adds an alternative framework for a school district board of education to use in teacher evaluation procedures. Permitting districts to select a framework they either develop or adopt allows local control, which is something I and my colleagues have repeatedly asked for.

My district has taken advantage of a similar provision where we have used the work of Dr. Robert Marzano, in conjunction with iObservation to create an evaluation system for teaching staff. We specifically selected for major areas:

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1. Planning to Close the Achievement Gap Using Data
2. Identifying Critical Content from the Standards
3. Providing Feedback and Celebrating the Process
4. Using Engagement Strategies

Each of these four areas are then broken down into a checklist of items that can be used for teachers to show evidence of innovative instructional practice and what accomplished tendencies educators should know, reference, and understand.

Our district also measures teachers on how they use high quality student data to plan instruction for students. Using data to drive instruction is at the basis of this measure. We look for teachers to not only inform their instruction, but they are required to focus on continuous change based upon the data they collect.

This process has been extremely beneficial for our district. Not only has it allowed a committee of administrators and teachers to work together to identify areas of importance for true instructional growth, but it has also strengthened relationships. Neither of these two aspects can be ignored if you want to have true instructional change. We challenge our teachers to support our students by creating innovative and challenging instruction, based on their specific needs, as identified by the formative assessment data. If we were only checking boxes on a state created, one-size-fits-all evaluation system, we would be doing a disservice to our students.

I cannot stress enough the importance of local control. We are used to working in a system where accountability is expected. We are not looking to get away from that. We are looking for a way to have some control over what standard we are held to. Again, we have the expertise and experience to set the standard and I hope this legislation helps move us in that direction.

I really appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony with you and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Willingham, Jr.', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Bruce R. Willingham, Jr.
Superintendent