



**Senate Education Committee  
Senate Bill 229 Testimony  
Perrysburg Exempted Village Schools Superintendent  
November 19, 2013**

Madam Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Sawyer and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address you this morning. My name is Thomas Hosler, and I am here to testify on the significance of Senate Bill 229 and my support of the proposed bill. Today, I have the privilege of appearing before you as the Superintendent of Perrysburg Exempted Village Schools and the Vice-Chair of the Alliance for High Quality Education, which represents 62 high performing districts from across the state. I can speak for my Board of Education and many of my colleagues from around the state when I say that we are greatly appreciative of Senate Bill 229 and the reasonable accommodations it makes to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES).

As educators, we want to improve and we want to guide teachers towards excellence. The State Superintendent is accurate in his assessment that we need a more rigorous evaluation system to help with that process. Evaluations can and should be an important tool in the improvement process and are essential to educators' professional growth. Our students and stakeholders deserve a system that ensures all educators are moving towards becoming accomplished.

We now have a new statewide evaluation system for teachers and with it a common language, forms and framework that for the first time serves as the fabric being woven through all Ohio classrooms. OTES has created a culture that values rich conversations across the state on defining quality instruction,

meaningful assessments and value-added. The requirement to develop Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) has been informative and has enabled grade level teams and content specific teachers from across the region to align their expectations for students. It has also driven us towards common formative and summative assessments. Teachers are now more actively participating in the thoughtful reflection during the pre-conference and contemplating how their instruction is influencing student achievement. Finally, OTES provides an understandable and clear rating of individual teacher performance.

There is much to celebrate in this bold and aggressive change.

In July 2012, the Ohio Department of Education created a document to address 10 myths about the new teacher evaluation system. Myth #9 stated: "This new evaluation system is like building the plane while we're flying it."

The Ohio Department of Education responded with the following:

Fact: Just as the Wright brothers built a plane, tried it by flying it, landed it and then refined the plane they built, the new evaluation system was built, tried and revised. Rather than write a new evaluation system and then expect schools to use it, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) worked with researchers, the Educator Standards Board and field-tested the new evaluation system. In the fall of 2011, ODE conducted a pilot with more than 250 schools. During this pilot, ODE gathered feedback from the participants and again made revisions to the system. The new evaluation system is being used by some schools in Ohio now.

Today, thankfully, we do not fly on planes remotely like those that were built by the Wright brothers. While the function and purpose of the original plane has remained virtually unchanged, the original Wright brothers' plane has changed for the better and continues to evolve with every new model introduced.

While we appreciate the evolution of OTES to get to this point, we still have work to do. OTES, as passed, is not perfect. It has already been tweaked and adjusted to improve its effectiveness. This Senate Bill 229 is essential in helping OTES to become a powerful tool for all Ohio educators.

While I shared with you what I, and some of my colleagues like about OTES, there are some significant issues with the system that this bill will help remedy. OTES, as is, lacks flexibility and differentiation needed for a truly successful and meaningful implementation.

Administrators are finding the time necessary to implement this system with fidelity and rigor is proving to be unreasonable. The principals are to serve as the instructional leaders of the building and are finding very little time left to address planning, progress monitoring, data analysis and other duties because of the time demands created by OTES.

Despite our best efforts, many districts, like Perrysburg, have had to spend dollars to meet the OTES evaluation timeline requirements. Whether it be hiring additional administrators, building deans to handle other administrative duties or a credentialed evaluator to perform the evaluations, dollars that should be going to other student programs are being spent to meet this requirement.

Teachers are impacted as well. We have heard from staff that they are also spending significant time preparing for the OTES conferences and are indicating the pre-conference planning form alone is taking from 8-10 hours to complete.

Differentiation is a vital component to being a successful classroom teacher. The research indicates that an effective evaluation system should allow for differentiation as well. For example, OTES provides little differentiation between a teacher that is “accomplished” and the lower two categories in terms of the process and treatment of the staff.

With implementing OTES there is a real issue emerging between teachers that continues to hinder the acceptance of the evaluation system. Teachers fall into two categories in the system: those who are able to create and use SLO's and those that can't. Teachers must use student growth data to account for 50% of their evaluation but clearly there is a difference between those teachers who can create their own assessments and those who must use the state's assessments.

This is why Senate Bill 229 is so important. The issues and concerns that I have mentioned previously will be addressed and changed for the better.

First, Senate Bill 229 would reduce the required percentage that student growth would be applied to a teacher's final overall evaluation from 50% to 35%. This would allow for greater local control in determining how each school district can utilize the 15% of student growth data. This may provide relief in balancing the student growth weight between teachers that use SLO's and those who do not. The Ohio Department of Education has switched back and forth on the percentage as it has rolled out OTES demonstrating what we all believe, student growth is important in the evaluation process but determining the specific number is best left with the local school board and community stakeholders.

Secondly, teachers who receive the "Accomplished" rating, which is the highest rating available, were originally given the benefit of being evaluated every other year. With Senate Bill 229, these accomplished teachers could be evaluated once every three years. This helps principals in two ways. First, it differentiates between these high performing teachers and the others. For a teacher to be rated "Accomplished" using the OTES rubric, it would require a dedicated professional and SB 229 recognizes this achievement. Second, it would permit the principals to have more time to focus on other teachers in need of refinement. It would also free these accomplished teachers to be leaders in their buildings and contribute to other staff members' success.

Third, SB 229 changes the frequency for the evaluation of a "Skilled" teacher from an annual evaluation to one that would occur every other year. The "Skilled" rating is the second highest overall rating a teacher can receive. These teachers would be functioning at a very high level and are very effective. Both the principal and the teacher would welcome a thorough evaluation every other year.

At any time the administrator feels it necessary or the student growth data drops dramatically, SB 229 permits the principal to evaluate more frequently if necessary.

SB 229 takes a significant step in addressing the practical issues that we as practitioners know are going to be a problem. Let me be clear, we welcome the chance to be evaluated and the challenge to become better at what we do. By no means am I advocating stepping away from our responsibility to the children, teachers, parents and stakeholders in our communities. That being said, there are ways to make OTES more meaningful, and Senate Bill 229 helps do both of them.

It is my hope that there is a rigorous evaluation system of OTES after a full implementation and a rich dialogue about how the system can improve and better serve the needs of those dedicated professionals who are using it.

Recently, a person I admire and respect stated in a radio interview:

We believe this additional flexibility still says evaluations are important in Ohio, but it allows additional flexibility and saves some money on the administrative side that can be put directly back into the classroom to help children learn.

State Senator Randy Gardner's statement resonated with so many teachers and educators because it appeared that the Senate was listening to our concerns. And for that we are very grateful.

On behalf of our organization and our industry, I thank you again for the chance to share our perspective and would be glad to take your questions at this time.

Thank you for letting us testify before you today.