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OEA Identifies Priorities Around Student Testing

On Tuesday, March 10, 2015, OEA President Becky Higgins testified before the Senate Education Committee and spelled out OEA's priorities as policymakers consider ways to address over-testing in Ohio. In her statement, President Higgins stated, "OEA believes it is important to limit both the time spent on testing and the use of test results to make high-stakes decisions. The current fixation with testing is sucking the oxygen out of our education system. Students, parents and educators are saying enough is enough." Further, she urged legislators to keep four principles in mind as they address the issue:

- 1. Reduce the amount of time spent on testing:** There is too much time devoted to testing. It's crowding out time for teaching and learning, limiting student engagement and narrowing our curriculum. The disproportionate time spent on testing is being felt by students, parents and educators. It's time to focus more clearly on our students and their needs.
- 2. Address problems with the tests:** The transition to the new tests, including PARCC, is producing mixed results at best. A myriad of issues have been raised including technology, lack of timely guidance, tests not properly aligned to standards, age appropriateness of tests, insufficient accommodations for special education students and a lack of timely results from the assessment. These problems must be fixed.
- 3. Use data appropriately to focus on helping students:** Timely data from testing should be used to inform instruction, advance student learning and promote the growth of educators in their practice. It is not appropriate to tie high-stakes decisions to testing results.



4. Allow time to get implementation right: As Ohio makes the transition to new standards and assessments, there needs to be sufficient time to make adjustments. OEA renews its call for policymakers to hit the pause button and extend to 3 years a moratorium on the use of student test scores in measuring student growth, evaluating teacher performance and any adverse consequence on local schools.

During the hearing the committee heard from two panels of teachers on the issue of testing. In addition to President Higgins, the committee heard testimony from OEA members Jackie Duncan (Shelby), Dan Greenberg (Sylvania) and Kevin Jackson (Columbus) who each provided powerful testimony about the impact of testing on their students, schools and fellow teachers.