



## Office of the Superintendent

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Good afternoon Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Hite, and Ranking Member Sawyer:

My name is Matthew Miller, Superintendent of the Mentor Exempted Village School District in Lake County, and I wish to thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on the subject of the assessments currently being used in our district. Specifically, I wish to address how testing impacts our school district calendar, the student impact on our overall educational delivery, and the newly discovered capacity issues we are having.

In my district, we have testing going on from February 2 until May 29 which includes a range of both required and district provided tests. However, the tools used and selected by the district best measure what we want our students to know and will gauge their progress at a moment in time. The overall testing involved includes: the OTELA, PARCC assessments (ELA/Math), AASCD (alternate assessments), Science and Social Studies, OGT testing, End of Course Exams, End of Year Exams, Aimsweb testing, and makeup exams. The impact of the assessments can be debated for their validity and for their value. Aside from the amount of testing involved for our students, I am deeply concerned that the number of tests and test preparations our teaching and support staff go through will exact a toll on them. Our focus, no matter how hard we try to avoid it, remains on the ever-changing assessment carousel. We need to reset our priorities and give our teachers a voice at the table when we make improvements on testing as it relates to the teaching and learning process. We need to narrow our educational focus.

At Mentor Schools, we have the capacity to engage our students in the classroom with technology. Our district is at the forefront in the nation with regard to innovation, blended learning, and providing our students with opportunities while they are part of our community. However, because of the electronic demands of testing, we are forced to reallocate student devices in our classrooms and school buildings. The very tools that we have been using to

engage and motivate students on their projects, their group work, and at home are repurposed simply to make sure we have the devices on hand for testing. This takes very important tools out of the hands of engaged students and instead reallocates these devices to meet compliance mandates of testing in Ohio.

I would suggest that we immediately reexamine the online testing, not because it is or isn't effective, but because Ohio is not yet ready for it. As I mentioned, Mentor Schools is on the leading edge of infusing technology into the classroom. If we can't accomplish this goal, it's my belief others will be struggling as well. And if that is the case, what does that do for our kids?

Just last week Mentor Schools participated in a practice run of the PARRC assessments. We were very successful in terms of bandwidth capabilities and in terms of having devices for students (albeit taking them out of the hands of other classrooms). However, there were fatal errors on the PARCC side of testing.

Here are examples of our issues with PARCC:

- 1. Numerous students were booted off the testing system. This appeared to be worst between 9:30AM and 1:00PM. Some students were kicked off but that was not evident on the teacher's screen. The students could not resume even after refreshing teacher screens and logging out then back in.
- 2. Computers showed error messages one saying that they are unable to communicate with the testing server, and another saying they are unable to connect with the proctor caching computer.
- 3. The process of getting students logged in from start to finish took 20-25 minutes. Sometimes this was because of user error; sometimes it seemed to be the Chromebook. Either way, getting all students in took 20-25 minutes on average.
- 4. There were cases when students went to submit answers and, even though they had answered all questions, the screen at the end identified unanswered questions. The teacher prompted the students to try different answers, but the same message occurred.
- 5. We have had situations where a student will be logged out, but the teacher number still reflects the student as active.
- 6. Two classes did not take the tests because students were unable to be logged in correctly at all.

- 7. Many students are concerned with not having enough time to complete prescribed tasks.
- 8. Some students in the same room on the same access point could not log in, yet others in the room were working fine. For example, in a room of 30 students, 20-25 were loading perfectly, while 5-10 were not able to load at all.
- 9. An orange outline appears around each question or answer as students move the pointer. Sometimes the orange box appears and the questions and answers disappear.
- 10. Questions would disappear and a new question would show up before students could finish reading and answering it. The question would have the same number (for example, question 3 would disappear and a different question number 3 would come up on the screen).

As you can see, Mentor is having a problem with PARCC testing – with a robust technology infrastructure to support us. I can guarantee that if we are having issues, the rest of Ohio's schools will be having issues as well. Is Ohio prepared to face the frustration from thousands of students, educators, and parents if we forge ahead with this type of testing when we have clearly not solved the logistical issues?

Chair Lehner, thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony, and I will be happy to respond to any questions at the pleasure of the chair.