

March 8, 2013

Dear TLE Commission:

RE: Regarding Student Growth Measurements for Quantitative Portion of TLE

We the undersigned and highly qualified specialists at Jenks East Elementary School urge our legislators to seriously explore the quantitative component of TLE *before* 2013/2014 implementation. Below you will find our "real time" experiences and "real voices" speaking facts which must be considered before Oklahoma implements a "one-fits-all" approach for evaluating educators and determining their compensation. Our "real time" teaching assignment consists of:

K4-4 urban, upper sociological public school district and our school's demographic overview:

- 1860 students today, numbers fluctuate daily due to highly transit population;
- 95% School Attendance
- 57% Receive Free & Reduced lunch and breakfast
- 10% Serviced through Special Education Services
- 24% Serviced through English Literacy Learner
- 37 Different languages represented
- Numerous multi-family dwellings have created vast tremendous demographic changes and challenges for all staff in the past ten years. Many of our students now come to school without their basic needs of food, adequate shelter, and minimal English language skills or parenting needs met. A typical student arrives at our school disadvantaged and struggling to be a success.
- Five separate grade-level buildings comprise our campus with an average of 12 classes per grade level. Separate cafeteria and gym buildings are used for lunch and physical education, necessitating time out of instruction for traveling across campus. Average class sizes are 27-30.
- Grades 1-4 rotate every three days to art, music and physical education instruction. This schedule provides only an average of 38 instruction hours per year minus any field trips and testing days that students annually miss. This is equivalent to 7 school days.
- Each of our specialists carries an annual average student load of 19 classes and 600 students.
- Our teaching experiences:
 - 2-34 years of experience in teaching art, music & physical education
 - 2-34 years of experience in K-12 Oklahoma schools.

- 50 % of these award-winning educators have post graduate degrees from leading universities.

Our “real time” voices speak and ask you to carefully consider these components which represent only one of the complex and vastly different Oklahoma schools scenarios in art, music and physical education. There is a wide discrepancy statewide among specialists regarding how many students are taught, how frequently they attend class and the resources provided for each teacher:

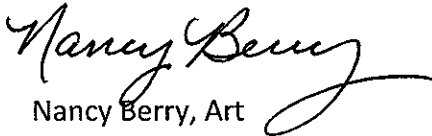
- A “one-fits-all” teacher assessment is not equitable when considering teacher compensation, especially for specialists who have inequitable time to teach a required curriculum. At best, specialists are given 38 hours of instruction time per year or the equivalent of 7 school days. This is in addition to the retention rate lost due to the rotating 3-day break before students return to revisit a lesson. A student receives an average of 5.3 hours of core curriculum a day. One-fits-all approach in evaluating art, music and physical education teachers’ effective practices is counter to the holistic nature of art, music and physical education of any student.
- Is there a fair and equitable procedure for evaluating specialists when considering the average class loads of 500+ students who attend specials every three days?
- The arts cannot be authentically assessed by mere data and scores. The arts are the voice of our humanity-our joys, our sorrows, our fears and hopes. Numerous scientific data and research states the inappropriateness of measuring arts’ success by numerical data alone. Standardized tests only measures base knowledge which has been established or memorized. It does not accurately measure how a student is expressing themselves through a creative process.
- Physical education is critical in educating the whole child toward healthy lifestyle rather than keeping the score of a winning season or stats of the physically gifted. Test scores would measure a one-time assessment although research documents that all students develop kinesthetically at different times, according to their physical development.
- Defining the intention of instruction, especially for young students, as authentic and affective teacher assessment does not adequately assess effective teaching practices.
- TLE language and vocabulary of the proposed qualitative component is very obscure and vague, yet it talks of a “least restrictive model” until statewide model of growth is to be implemented. These words insinuate a restrictive approach in evaluating teachers and students. Subject area instructional time is currently being wasted by trying to meet all aspects and interpret the meanings of TLE models and adapt “teaching to the test” as witnessed throughout schools in America.
- Have the numerous factors, as outlined by Dr. Manzano’s meta-analysis data on school success, been considered as we connect student scores to teacher’s compensation in

OK? Does this evaluation system empower or discourage educators? Although our efforts to improve education are laudable, commonsense approaches must be taken into consideration. Currently, teacher morale is low due to unrealistic expectations in education. Educators frequently feel that many of the requirements are clearly unrealistic in our real-time world of teaching and are established by those who are not in the classroom.

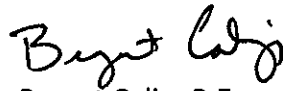
- This is very discouraging for entry to career teachers and further contributes to the current retention rate of five years for new teachers. These unrealistic expectations and requirements seem to be lacking a common sense approach as we compete for funding of Race to the Top. How will this affect the probationary teacher who is starting in the field, when there is no longer entry year mentoring offered in the state? What models will the entry year teacher use for success? Who will help guide these teachers with no mentor in place?
- Standard portfolio requirements would imply that all specialist teachers across the state teach in the same circumstance with advantages and disadvantages. However, some teachers see students every day, while others see them once a week. Each teacher has different materials and tools available. If portfolios are used, will all portfolios be assessed or a random sampling? Will factors such as attendance, SPED, ELL, etc, be taken into consideration? What concessions will fit into the picture for our large number of student turnovers? How will portfolio assessment be funded? Will it be another unfunded state mandate?
- Why are literacy scores being calculated in specialist teachers' salaries when we are contracted to teach art, music and physical education? This is obviously not what we are contracted to teach, despite any and all efforts we make to support the 90% reading goal.
- How often a student is serviced by a teacher, classroom sizes and district demographics must be taken into consideration when evaluating a teacher. How can this equitably determine a teachers' compensation from district to district? Could this be compared to how many patients a doctor cures or how many cases an attorney wins-regardless or any factors that insures the professional's success? Don't all extrinsic and internal factors contribute to any professional's success?
- Have we traded common sense approaches in our efforts to Race to the Top and improve Oklahoma's embarrassing education position?

We respectfully join you in the quest of improving the education system for all Oklahoma students and improving the workplace environment for all Oklahoma teachers. However, we respectfully ask you to seriously consider our "real-time" voices, representing numerous Oklahoma art, music and physical education teachers, as the decision to determine a teacher's compensation be based upon tests scores or a standard portfolio assessment. We respectfully ask you to reconsider," Is this an equitable position for all elementary specials teachers in Oklahoma and all Oklahoma students? We are available to our concerns over the quantitative portion of TLE before implementation. The specialists of Jenks East Elementary are available to participate in further collaboration toward equitable solutions.

Respectfully,



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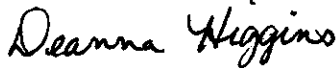
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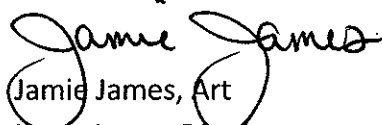
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