

**Testimony for Michelle LeVasseur**

**Joint Public Hearing of  
Program Review and Investigations Committee  
And Education Committee**

**February 27, 2008**

Good Afternoon Senator Gaffey, Senator Meyers, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Wasserman and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee and Education Committee. I could not make the public hearing tonight but would like to testify in support of SB 329 and SB 330. My name is Michelle LeVasseur and I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher (Year 3, BEST passed year 3) from Bristol Public Schools.

My portfolio was completed during my second year teaching as a full time third grade teacher. I began preparation for the numeracy portion of my portfolio in the beginning of November 2006 and implemented it in my classroom at the end of November. I prepared the literacy portion of my portfolio in early January 2007 with implementation in mid to late January.

I feel there are valuable learning components and downfalls to the portfolio process as a second year teacher. Being a reflective practitioner is extremely important to the field of teaching. The BEST portfolio requires one to reflect upon and justify each lesson and really examine “what do I want my students to be able to do” and “how do I know this”. The BEST portfolio process is extremely time consuming on a personal and professional level.

Preparation time for each part of the portfolio (numeracy and literacy) took several days and many hours of research to create my “proficient” piece of work. In reality, teachers do not have days or weeks to plan 2, 5 day segments of lessons for each content area taught. While thoughtful preparation goes into each and every lesson that I prepare for my students, reality does not allow me the luxury of extensive preparation time in or outside of school.

As a second year teacher, I have had ten months of previous classroom experience working with the curriculum and classroom management plan I utilize. In my opinion completing the portfolio during year two did not allow me enough time to develop a comfort level with the material or content I was to use for my portfolio. I really was not a year “2” teacher but a teacher who had completed 10 months of active teaching. I was expected to

complete a comprehensive portfolio for two content areas **and** demonstrate all of the skills and abilities teachers develop over time, with guidance and most importantly, experience.

I feel completing the portfolio during year three or four would have given me the confidence and experience needed to approach this process more easily. It also would allow me to demonstrate my skills and abilities as a teacher with some experience rather than one with just over ten months experience.

The video component is also an unrealistic expectation of a teacher or his or her students. The equipment is a distraction to both. In my case, my district did provide me with the proper equipment but I had a malfunction. I needed to tape a segment again, which required me to have the students complete a different version of their performance task. This required more time from me and my students. Real life classrooms do not engage in such activities.

Until a teacher obtains tenure, he or she has multiple observations from a building administrator and works with a mentor throughout the school year. In my opinion part of the portfolio process should include real time teaching and observations from these resources. This would allow "teaching in action" and give a truer picture of a teacher's abilities, rather than a planned, orchestrated, 5 day learning segment.

As mentioned earlier the entire portfolio process from start to finish encompassed approximately five months of planning, implementing, writing and revising. During the implementation portion of the segments specifically, valuable time was taken away from my usual planning time I dedicate to my students outside of school. Each evening I needed to go home to write my reflections of the day's lesson. I still needed to plan the remainder of my school day which caused me to take time away from my family. Because of the page limitations for each lesson log, I needed to focus on being concise which involved editing and revising my work several times.

While the writing and reflecting allows the scorer to evaluate what you are doing, the time that is involved in this process is unrealistic.

My entire portfolio was 162 pages long. It included pre-assessments, student work, lesson logs and reflections. Also included were photographs of students completing activities involved with the learning process. To present my portfolio in an attractive manner and reflect the quality work of my students, I had color copies made. These copies cost me approximately \$15.00 at Staples. I needed to purchase a pocket folder, jumbo binder clips, VHS video tapes, photo development, and pay for postage. My out of pocket expense for completing the portfolio was approximately \$35.00. Since most of the components were necessary, these materials should be provided to us.

Finally, the scores are reported on September 1<sup>st</sup>. School begins on or about that date. Imagine the teacher that does not pass. He or she must feel incompetent at the start of the school year. It would be better to have the scores reported during the summer, when the individual portfolio is scored and provide very specific feedback. This will allow a teacher to begin the year knowing areas needing improvement and plan the school year accordingly.

As I stated earlier, I feel the portfolio process is a valuable tool to assess teachers and it did provide me with many useful activities that were thought provoking and encouraged me to delve deeper into my teaching practice. There are many unrealistic expectations of this process that do not reflect everyday life as a classroom teacher.

