

I am writing after reading the recent article in the February 2019 issue of [Ohio Schools](#). **I cannot even begin to tell you how much I despise the state-mandated American Institute of Research (AIR)¹ tests we must administer.**

SILENT PROTESTS

I am in my 15th year of teaching and during this time, just like every other teacher, I have seen children panic, cry, vomit, etc. I've had students refuse to write/type the required essays in defiance of the tests.

Moreover, as if in silent protests of frustration, I've had students *finish* these state-required tests in *record* time because they no longer cared to try. I can't say or do anything or risk losing my teaching license. I spend the entire school year building my students' confidence and gaining their trust; I can see by the look in their eyes that both have been eroded when they take those tests.

I have students who fear they won't be promoted to the next grade if they don't pass their AIR tests. I reassure them that the AIR tests do not determine their advancement. What I don't tell them is that the only one held accountable here is me. I earned a 100% grade-level passage rate last year, so I am not writing with sour grapes in mind.

We have now lived through the *Ohio Achievement Test* (OAT), the *Ohio Achievement Assessment* (OAA), the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC) — and now, the worst of them all — the AIR tests.

Because the standardized tests are online, there is so much pressure to get everyone logged in properly and not have a technology crash.

Research shows that children assess better on paper and pencil, but here we are. As Julie Holderbaum said, the icing on the cake is that the computer is going to grade the essays. How is it even possible for a computer alone to determine true student learning? [Related Blog: [Power and Potential of Our Stories](#) By Julie Holderbaum, Minerva EA/OEA]

I just think of all of the other things I could do if I didn't have the ever-changing state mandated tests constantly hanging over my head.

Since we aren't allowed to see the test in advance or during its administration, we educators are aiming at a moving target. If I didn't have to teach to a test, I could teach poetry. My fifth-grade English Language Arts classes have not had a poetry unit in three years. Why? Because there isn't time. As a passionate ELA teacher, it breaks my heart not to share the beauty that poetry holds, but cuts need to be made somewhere.

Instead, I have to **spend far too much time teaching my students to answer bizarre "Part A/Part B" questions and how to write a five-paragraph essay.** I know adults who can't write a five-paragraph essay; but, my ten- and eleven-year-old students need to know how to do this.

I don't think Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) would say this is appropriate for my students' stage of cognitive development. Additionally, I'm expected to differentiate in the classroom; however, all of the children take the same test. How is that fair?

TRUST US: WE'RE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

The state has a Third-Grade Reading Guarantee; it should support it. That would help to ensure that the students in my fifth-grade class would be at the appropriate reading level. State educator leaders (and legislators) should trust that the 600+ school districts of Ohio, have hired honest, responsible teachers who take pride in their craft and in their desire to teach the next generations.

Trust us to do our jobs and we will prepare our children in the best way possible. **Imagine what we could do with at least a month added back to our teaching plans.**

1. *The PARCC and AIR assessments replaced the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) and will replace the OGT (Ohio Graduation Test) starting with the class of 2019. The Ohio Department of Education worked with volunteer educators and the American Institute of Research (AIR) to develop the Third-Grade English Language Arts test. This test uses the same testing platform as state-mandated standardized tests.*

Kim Snyder is a 5th-grade regular-education as well as a Gifted English Language Arts educator with Wadsworth City Schools and member of the OEA/Wadsworth E.A.