

State House Testimony - Wednesday, April 23rd

Let me introduce myself. I'm Andrea Rose Harrington, I proudly serve as the Providence Teachers Union's Vice President of Middle Schools. I speak to you today as a Providence Public School Teacher of 15 Years, a longtime Providence Resident, and a PPST Graduate in support of H 5335, which would nullify the state takeover's term and return us to local control as of July 2025.

When I was first hired, in a post-pink-slip extravaganza, teachers faced salary step and hiring freezes, rapid administrative changes, and worried about what loomed next. After a decade hit, so did a global pandemic, which changed everything about the way we'd teach and the world our students grow up in. Despite the tribulations of these critical moments in my career, I have never felt a toxicity close to the one derived from our latest years under State Takeover.

Now, how could that be, right? They paint a beautiful picture: hiring "world-class talent", offering reimbursements and incentives for high-need areas such as ELL Certification, and selecting rigorous curricular materials. Let's break it down.

There's boisterous conversation about progress monitoring, a path to greater success on RICAS and other standardized testing. Of course, there is value in diagnostics and proper monitoring. There is value in knowing where a student stands academically and how much the meter moves. It's how informed decisions are made in and for the classrooms. But their progress monitoring isn't about informing instruction, it's about compliance. It's an attempt to explain away the multi millions they've spent outsourcing analytics to DMG and buying into long-winded contracts with box curriculum and online only platforms.

Heartbroken by the testing fatigue and increased anxiety of my students, I sat down and collected real numbers to accurately depict an average middle schooler's test schedule:

ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iReady BOY, MOY, EOY (3)• STAR BOY, MOY, EOY (3)• Pre / Mid / Post per Unit (12) <p><i>In addition, iReady, Mastery Standards occur every 2 weeks. These are selected and pushed out by the district. (Roughly 24 per grade per year.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total of 18 Assessments for 6-8th Grade
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iReady BOY, MOY, EOY (3)• STAR BOY, MOY, EOY (3)• Check Readiness per unit (5)• Middle of Unit for some units (2)• End of Unit per Unit (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total of 21 Assessments for 6th and 7th Grade• Total of 25 Assessments for 8th Grade

	<i>In addition, each unit includes 1-3 Mastery Checks per unit. (Roughly 16 per grade per year.)</i>	
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 End of Unit Assessments • 7 Checkpoints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 14 per grade • THIS WAS REVISED FROM 36 ASSESSMENTS **
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th Grade NGSA Interims (3) • 7th Grade NGSA Interims (2) • 8th Grade NGSA Interims (2) • 8th Grade NGSA (1) • Pre / Post per Unit (12) • Mid optional for now (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 21 for 6th Grade • Total of 20 for 7th Grade • Total of 21 for 8th Grade
SUBTOTAL	BY GRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subtotal of 74 for 6th Grade • Subtotal of 73 for 7th Grade • Subtotal of 78 for 8th Grade
State Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RICAS (4) • NAEP (1) at random • If MLL, ACCESS (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 4 Assessments for Regular 6-7th Grade • Total of 4-5 Assessments for Regular 8th Grade • Total of 9 for MLL 6-8th Grade
Grand Total		<p>6th Grade = 74-78 7th Grade = 73-77 8th Grade = 78-83</p> <p>*WITH MASTERY CHECKS, ADD 40 MORE ASSESSMENTS PER GRADE</p>

This means an 8th Grade MLL student takes upward to 123 standardized tests per academic school year, in a matter of 181 days. These are NOT teacher-selected or designed. These are not aligned with the curriculum map. They are dictated down to the date and time. As the State Takeover has led us to this outrageous testing cycle, they've become so deeply rooted in the idea of "teaching to the test" that they've left little room to teach. These are children. Children who deserve to be more than a test number. These are expert teachers who deserve more than being reduced to a data spreadsheet.

Often losing one to two days a week for this mandated testing, I'm left with a scripted curriculum that costs the district millions. This is the common thread amongst content areas: an expensive curriculum that aligns with, you guessed it, standardized test prep. Math has such an intense timeline, there's no room to reteach despite what the students' data shows need for. Science and ELD try to manage with half their platforms, since they didn't bother to buy the full

kit. Social Studies is told to teach to a standard rather than in chronological order. Meanwhile, I in the English Department are reminded that excerpts are a better choice over reading a whole book. Is this really what our parents want? What our children need?

With an ever-growing and diversified MLL population, it's fundamental that our curricula reflect our students' needs, are culturally responsive to their unique and beautiful identities, and are flexible. Just as the students have become defeated through a grueling series of tests, teachers feel that we are viewed as inadequate. Between the constant pressure of testing and the disengaging curricula, it's no wonder we've landed in this toxic work environment. There's little time for creativity, social emotional connection, or just kids having a moment of fun.

Through the years, I have racked up enough complaints to pull a Cory Booker here. I simply skimmed the surface of deflating climate and culture amongst all stakeholders. I didn't yet mention that due to a budget freeze, we ran out of paper for weeks (while we had no internet because of the hack). How they reduced the number of student-facing support staff to ensure they could afford their bloated office positions and raises. How their lack of transparency equaled last-minute, rushed after-school meetings where staff were told their schools were closing. Their high-performing, deeply rooted community schools were closing. How they got rid of well-liked and known apps such as KinVo and Google Classroom for the likes of overly complicated Canvas and less successful ParentSquare. How their mismanagement meant I (and many others) covered \$1000s in ELL Tuition out of pocket because they kept stiffing the bill.

If numbers speak louder than words, consider this: 979 teachers have resigned since the takeover, and 331 have retired. This year alone, 79 have already resigned, and 41 are retiring. People aren't walking, they are running away from this district - many who said they were "lifers" until this takeover. And let's not forget, most took a pay CUT when they left!

It doesn't have to be this way. We have parents, ready and willing to share their wants and needs if given the opportunity to. We have present and former students whose voices are waiting for the stage. We have teachers begging to be treated as the experts and professionals that we are. We have such untapped resources and institutional knowledge right here at our fingertips.

I know that a return to local control is not a fix-all all but it can be a new beginning. One that puts a collaborative plan in place. One that puts children, not test scores, first. One that honors, not alienates, community organizations. One that builds from local voices and becomes the school district we need and deserve.