

# Manvel Public School

Inspiring 21st Century Learners to Influence 22nd Century Successes



March 21, 2023

Good morning Chairman Weisz and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Dave Wheeler and I am the Superintendent for Manvel Public School. This testimony is in opposition to SB 2260. While much of what is expected in this bill is already being done and, therefore, has no reason to be written in this legislation, my opposition lies in a few factors that are currently in Section 1 and Section 2 of this bill.

In Section 1, SB 2260 mandates that districts get consent in writing prior to making a video or a voice recording of a child. Let me share a few examples of where this becomes a logistical nightmare for schools;

- 1) Every athletic team that I know of in the state of North Dakota tapes their games and some tape practices so that teaching can be done through the use of these videos. If one child on that team has a parent that will not let their child be videoed, does the coaching staff and all the other players then not get the benefit of learning from this strategy that is common practice in almost 100% of the school districts in North Dakota? That cannot be seen as fair to the coaches or the rest of the team.
- 2) When I was a high school principal, I had a speech teacher that would videotape her students for various speeches throughout the semester and then share them with the students as a way of guiding her practice with the students so that they would become better speakers by seeing their errors. While the tapes were never shared outside the room, this was a powerful way for students to assess themselves and become more accomplished in public speaking. Is this no longer acceptable for one student but acceptable for the other 10-15 students in a class? Does this strategy for helping students learn now get eliminated from a teacher's toolkit?
- 3) As an elementary principal in a small community, we would regularly video and livestream elementary concerts and programs so that parents and grandparents who could not attend had an opportunity to watch the program, either in real time or later at a better time. Again, we could potentially let 1 parent/family deny everyone else who wants to witness this event from having that opportunity. As a grandfather of 2 elementary children who live in Texas, I would be disappointed if one parent in that Texas school district would prohibit a grandfather or grandmother living in North Dakota from seeing that experience the only way they can.
- 4) The expectation that a teacher "Review, copy, and record" all curriculum for each class or course offered by the school and any teacher training materials at least 3 days before use

of the material is absolutely a bridge too far. Teachers currently using the best practices in education are not making lessons out 3 days in advance because they do not know where each child will be with their learning that far in advance. More and more we are seeing teachers assess their students daily to understand what the child's strengths are and also their weaknesses'. This philosophy allows for lessons to be made each day and then makes the instruction more relevant to each student. Small group instruction and individual instruction are the norm in 2023 more than ever and this idea that a parent gets to review the curriculum/lesson 72 hours in advance can't be guaranteed. As a current school leader, I would be disappointed to have a teacher with lesson plans or curriculum ready to teach on Thursday when it is Monday on the calendar.

There is also a requirement that each parent gets to review "Teacher Training Materials?" Am I to believe this to be the material we use in our professional development time with our staff? As an example, this year the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) mandated all teachers in grades K-3 begin to become proficient in the "Science of Reading" philosophy as a means of improving the reading scores statewide. Our REA and our district used LETRS as the curriculum to train our staff, PK-5 and special education. We will spend 18-21 hours this year with that curriculum. If one parent in my district disagreed with LETRS, would we have been required to abandon the training that was mandated to use by DPI? Would it require more parents than 1, how many? Would our district then have to find a Science of Reading curriculum that made that one parent happy, but what if another parent disagreed? Do you see the insanity that potentially comes to public education with these parameters being established in schools? We are working in a time where teachers are in very short supply. They have never been paid enough, they have always been criticized for "only working 9 months" and now, we will decide to let the community dictate; a) what is being taught, b) when it's being taught, and c) what resources we are allowed to use to teach our content? Does this type of legislation honestly make it more likely for us to bring young people to the profession? Does it make it seem likely that we can keep the teachers we currently have in the profession?

It is obvious that many of our elected members of the House and Senate have decided that public education no longer serves a purpose to the children of this state. They believe that our content is being designed to destroy the moral and ethical values that this country holds to be true. I am here to tell all of you, as a person who has been in K-12 education since 1994, that nothing could be further from the truth. The people I have worked with and the people I currently work with come to their roles every day with a focus on teaching the standards they have been given and supporting every child with their academic and emotional well-being. Please, let schools do their job, let them follow the statutes currently in place, and teach to the best of our abilities for 171 to

175 days a year. Schools should be expected to acknowledge any concern a parent or group of parents may have in curriculum material and I believe that a large, large majority of school districts already do this. Policies have been written and they are in place for parents to address any concerns that potentially exist. Do not take this any farther than it needs to be taken, listen to the people who teach for a living and trust them when they tell you they are doing their job to the best of their abilities every single day. Keep some dignity in public education and vote, "NO" on SB 2260.

Dr. Dave Wheeler  
Superintendent  
Manvel Public School