Katie Hartley Testimony
April 14th, 2010
Committee on Education and Labor
"How Data can be Used to Inform Educational Outcomes"

Hello Chairman Miller, Ranking member Kline and Members of the Committee:

Good morning, my name is Katie Hartley and I am a teacher and value added data specialist for Miami East Local Schools in Miami County, Ohio. I'm here today to talk to you about how I have used value added and achievement data in my classroom and with other groups of teachers to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.

Battelle for Kids, a nonprofit organization, brought value added data analysis to schools in Ohio in 2002, and Miami East was one of the first school districts in the state to begin to use this kind of information. Value added data models use a student's individual test history, along with historical data of other students to predict each student's performance. Each student's actual performance is then compared to their predicted performance to find a value added score. The difference between a student's predicted performance and actual performance (positive or negative) is attributed to the school and/or teacher. This value added measurement allows schools and teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of current enacted curriculum and instructional practices.

Over the past eight years I have used these value added scores from students in my classes to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of my teaching, made changes accordingly, and made judgments about these changes with value added scores from subsequent tests. For example, when low achieving students in my fifth grade math class received lower value added scores than high achieving students in the same class, I had to examine what skills I was teaching in that class, how I was teaching those skills, and how I was measuring students' understanding and mastery of the skills. I had to decide what I was doing in my classroom that was allowing high achieving students to score even higher than predicted, but was keeping my low achieving students from scoring where they were predicted. I decided to keep the curriculum the same since I was teaching all the skills and knowledge that the Ohio Department of Education put forth for fifth graders in math, but decided to change some of my instructional and evaluation techniques. I incorporated more cooperative learning opportunities for students to work together, more hands on activities for students, more games that practiced essential skills, and also arranged for many low achieving students to have additional help with their math work either from a volunteer or myself. When the value added scores came out the following year, students at all achievement levels (high, middle and low-achieving students) had much higher value added scores than the year before. Without the value added scores for students in my classes, I would not have known I needed to make these changes, nor would I have had a means to measure the effectiveness of the changes I made in my teaching. Without a longitudinal data system with the ability to link student scores over time, this information would not have been available. In other words, I would not be as effective a teacher without these data, and without the support of my local and state agencies. Dr. Todd Rappold, my district superintendent, and Dr. Deborah

Delisle, state superintendent, both believe strongly in the use of data to inform educational decisions, and in giving educators the tools they need to do this effectively and successfully.

I have also worked with all teachers at Miami East Schools on the use of value added and achievement data to make decisions, and plan for instruction for each school year. Our ability to look at student level data both for achievement and value added scores has allowed us to make many improvements in teaching and learning in our schools. Miami East has received the top rating the state of Ohio gives school districts, 'Excellent with Distinction' two years in a row. This rating is reserved for school districts that not only have high achievement scores, high graduation and attendance rates, but also have at least two consecutive years of positive value added scores. The staff at Miami East has demonstrated a dedication to using data to improve instruction, and our students have benefited from this work. The quality of the education students at Miami East receive is directly correlated to their access to longitudinal student level data, professional development time and resources around the use of value added data to inform instruction, and the leadership and support of the state superintendent, the district superintendent, and the district value added specialist. A quality education for Miami East students is made possible by quality student level data.