

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Re: SB 596

Dear Members,

The question is a simple one: what do we want our children to learn? Due to our cultural history, social divisions, and political polarization, we will have long and undoubtedly ongoing discussions on what we will teach our children. This is as it should be. Our differences of outlook and perspective should be valued and respected.

But today, I would like to address the question not of the substance of what we teach and what our children learn but of the process. It seems to me that, especially in the early years and the lower grades, if we want our children to learn how to take a test, then we should do just that - test them. But unfortunately, that's the primary lesson they will learn - how to take a test with the result being that learning will subsequently and irrevocably be linked with that testing. They will learn, whether we hope they do or not, to associate learning with test-taking and data-gathering. I would hope that I don't need to convince you that learning, again at such an impressionable young age, should be more than keeping up, taking a test, being assessed. Learning at these tender years should and can be a wonder, a joy, an instillation of curiosity that hopefully will last a life time for our children. I would encourage you to limit (or completely curtail) the testing required for children in these first few years of their school life. Give them a chance to learn how to enjoy learning before, if we must, dampening that enthusiasm with the barrage of testing that seems to be all the rage. At the very least, let us reserve that ordeal for their latter years.

Many thanks for taking into consideration my brief thoughts as I ask you to support SB 596.

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