

From the desk of Rep. Jim Weidner



**Date:** March 19, 2013  
**To:** Members of the Oregon Legislature  
**From:** Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant  
**Re:** HB 3426 [Parent Opt Out]

Oregon Education Association, representing 42,000 teachers, education support professionals, and community college faculty and staff throughout Oregon, respect the value of assessment, properly crafted, properly used, and properly evaluated for aiding in student success.

Ever since the passage of the so-called “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law, however, our members have seen the valuable tool of formative testing morph into another thing entirely. The tests, no longer aligned to an educator’s teaching or curriculum, became a way to sort and label students, schools, districts, and educators. As the cost of these tests exploded, so too did the number of weeks per year devoted solely to test-taking. Now, too many people mistake test scores for meaningful measurements of student learning gains.

In some parts of the country, parents’ growing concern over testing mania has given rise to an opt-out movement. In the Pacific Northwest, educators in several schools are refusing to administer statewide summative tests. In Portland’s Grant High School, a student movement against over-testing has emerged.

OEA believes that testing has its place. Oregon’s current four-and-a-half weeks of school devoted to statewide testing seems excessive, though. We know that schools and districts are “graded” by these tests too – and are held accountable for test compliance on the part of their students. Oregon’s conditional waiver from NCLB requires the administration of summative assessments each year. HB 3426 does not contemplate district opt-out from this requirement, so it is our assumption that the waiver is in no way compromised by this legislation. While school districts may “score” poorly on their published “report cards” in the event that too many of their parents opt their children out of state testing, this is unlikely to harm districts in a significant way.

The bottom line is that HB 3426 gives parents or guardians the decision of determining whether they will allow their children to submit to the yearly testing regime. Under current law, that right is reserved exclusively for parents whose religious beliefs do not permit testing or whose children receive special education services. We believe that all parents ought to have that right.