

Dear Oregon Representative Gelser,
House Bill HB 4150
Public Hearing 2/5

Re: Proficiency Grading / Assessments / Learning HB 4150

In a large local Southern Oregon School District proficiency grading has resulted in serious life lessons for students that may not be helping students and citizens in the long run:

1. Attendance does not matter, homework does not matter, showing up does not matter...
2. Behavior does not matter
3. You do not have to participate or engage in class
4. You can retake tests (and they are the same tests) as many times as needed to pass or earn desired grade – throughout the entire year (not ending at end of term or semester or grading period)
5. Adults / Teachers are at your disposal – like a fast food restaurant

Teachers seem pressured to not teach or stress or focus on skills that are essential to thinking, learning, civics, analysis, citizenship, engagement, work and success in life. To raise graduation rates teachers are pressured to pass students to keep them on track with graduating. The focus is on “just passing and graduating” students. There are complex issues that need to be analyzed and multiple ongoing strategies that need to be implemented. Administrators keep track regarding teacher stats on how many students they pass versus fail and are criticized for failing too many students in spite of teachers efforts to engage students, contact and involve parents etc.

Students from proficiency grading, learn to re-take tests multiple times and have not learned how to learn in class, participate in discussions, do essential readings and study and have not learned independent study skills. Then when students go to college tragically they often find they are not prepared to succeed in college and some flunk out their freshman year accumulating debt.

Essential skills such as team work and interpersonal relationships that are essential to success in the workplace are ignored. Quality, conscientious teachers are concerned that what students are learning is counterproductive.

Local business leaders express frustration that the younger workers are learning habits at school that are negative workplace performance issues and are counterproductive to a successful economy.

With concern, respect and hope
Sincerely,

Larry Slessler, 22 year workforce development, teacher and program manager in workforce development/ WIA and welfare to work programs
Elizabeth Hayes, 20 + year high school social studies teacher and left because of above listed concerns.