

I am opposed to Senate Bill 1538 because I don't understand the distrust of parents that the bill enshrines. The bill uses the phrase 'educational goals' over 40 times. But it never defines them. They are simply reflections of the school board's priorities and subject to the school board's interpretations. This creates problems on two levels.

First, not every student or family benefits from the same structures and priorities. For example, an 'educational goal' for a k-3 primary school might be 'developing critical reasoning skills.' Many children might benefit far more from the structure of the trivium, which emphasizes memorization in the early years and logical application later (I've met the product of such schools and their reasoning abilities exceed those I've encountered in the top graduates of places like Wilson). Such a school would be ruled out on the basis of such 'educational goals.' But a decision to rule it out would have definite adverse effects on those students who would benefit from such a structure.

Second, the 'educational goal' becomes an item which is judged by the local district board. The school board might seek to 'developing critical reasoning skills' but then disregard any method other than the Common Core as contrary to those goals. There is no science that says one particular educational method is the right and only method to achieve educational goals. But this law enables school boards to pretend there is and strangle new and innovative approaches to the educational problems our children face.

The real issue is when the educational goals morph into goals only public schools can achieve. For example, they could create a goal of 'encouraging community connection.' This sounds great, but a charter school might never pass because the district board might consider public schools the only way to be truly committed and connected to one's community. A private school distances students from their peers and a charter school - but virtue of attracting the most ambitious and driven - does the same.

This bill is an attempt to kill charter schools - and it will be most costly to those kids the public model fails to serve effectively.

I encourage the Oregon Senate not to pass this bill.

Thank you,

Joseph Cox  
Portland, Oregon