

Testimony - House Bill 2713
Oregon House Education Committee
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Madam Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Frederick, and members of the committee,

I am a year shy of teaching in elementary classrooms for a quarter of a century. I have taught in a one room independent school, a wealthy suburban school in Beaverton, and, for the last 9 years, I have been teaching at Lot Whitcomb Elementary school in the North Clackamas School District. Whitcomb is a Title 1 school, and this year, 100% of our students receive free breakfast and lunch. Just under 50% of our students are learning English as a second language.

Before I begin discussing the reasons for my wholehearted support for the common sense HB 2713, I want to take just an important minute to share with you why I continue to love being in the classroom. Clearly, it's all about the kids. It's an honor (and, to be honest, a great deal of fun) to get to work with young children. I take my job, and its inherent responsibilities, very seriously, and I hope, to my core, that my efforts make a positive contribution to the lives of children. That is my daily litmus test - how will this benefit the children in my classroom?

That's why I'm here today. I am concerned about the demands our new statewide testing, the SBAC, will place upon the 8-9 year olds in my classroom. And, I have to wonder, "How will SBAC benefit the children in my classroom?"

Please allow me to sketch my third classroom for you. Currently, I teach 22 students. This is my smallest class in 16 years. On Fridays, thanks to a community partnership with another school and local church, I put food inside 9 of my students backpacks. This is food to help tide the family over the weekend until the students can return to the security of a free breakfast and lunch at school on Monday. Two weeks ago, one of my students and her mother had to move in with another family due to parental conflict. Nine of my students speak English as a second language. On our field trip to the Portland Youth Philharmonic Symphony last week, 10% of my families were unable to pay the \$2 cost.

These are the very real needs and circumstances under which I happily teach.

This year, after 5 devastating years of layoffs and engorged classrooms, we adopted the new Common Core State Standards. There is much to admire in these standards, but that is not

the point I wish to make. Rather, I encourage committee members to think about the impact this adoption has created. Budget cuts mean that we are using curriculum that does not meet these new standards, so we teachers are all scrambling to find resources. We elementary teachers need hours on a weekly basis to not only delve into these standards, but to simply create and/or find resources to use in our classrooms.

On top of all these changes, Oregon has also adopted a new statewide assessment, the SBAC. Please keep in mind that this is the 3rd different statewide assessment I've administered in the last 9 years. I've gone from OAKS, to a year of paper and pencil testing, back to OAKS, and now SBAC.

In a year when we have an entirely new curriculum, the SBAC is forcing me to take precious staff development time to learn how to administer these tests. As a District, we have already spent a full day (one of 6 we get a year) on getting teachers prepared for the changes just around this test. As I speak, my substitute teacher is beginning a 3 week reading unit that simulates what our 3rd graders will face with the SBAC. That's nearly 10% of my whole class reading instruction for the year spent on preparing students for a test.

I have to ask, is all this time benefiting my students? Especially when our Assistant Secretary of Education, Ron Saxton, fully expects 2/3rds of student statewide to fail the SBAC tests.

Please, for the sake of the students in my classroom, take the time to comprehensively evaluate SBAC's full scope and impact on our students, teachers, and school Districts.

That is why I have taken time away from my classroom today, to urge you to support the straightforward, common sense HB 2713. The least we can do for the the 8-9 year olds in my classroom, let alone the more than half a million public school students in Oregon, is to evaluate SBAC's effectiveness. Let's take the time to gain a clear picture of how much our limited time, money, and resources are going to this new assessment program. It is only through such a comprehensive evaluation that we educators, legislators, and citizens of Oregon, can fully answer the litmus test of, "How does SBAC benefit the students in our State?"

Thank you for your consideration,

Douglas A. Bridge