

I am writing to support the passage of HB2655, HB2713 and HB2715. As both a teacher in the Lake Oswego School District and as a parent of a junior at Grant High School in Portland Public Schools, I have witnessed first-hand the confusion and chaos that this expensive and hastily and poorly implemented high stakes assessment has inflicted on students, teachers and administrators.

Our family has chosen to opt-out our daughter, Rachel, who is a junior at Grant High School. We made this decision based on the concerns expressed in this letter, but additionally because of our fervent belief that high-stakes assessments are not best educational practice and that they actually detract from the education of the student. Rachel is an honor student, is taking three AP courses, and has pursued a rigorous college prep course of study. She is proving her "college-readiness" organically. Her excellent teachers at Grant are guiding her along a path that ensures that she is fully intellectually engaged. She does not need Smarter Balanced to prove herself. Grant High School doesn't either.

I am not opposed to tests. I teach Advanced Placement European History to high school 10th, 11th and 12th graders. Those national exams are well-constructed and are scored using a public and clear rubric. Student, parents and teachers know what materials, knowledge and skills are required to do well on the exam.

What I am opposed to is the lack of information and transparency in the construction, implementation and usage of the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Especially troubling has been the inconsistency among districts in informing parents and students of their rights in this high-stakes environment, as well as privacy issues in the storage and use of student data.

For the most part, districts and the state are unclear in what the educational goals are in the Smarter Balanced Assessment. From what I understand, the tests are not diagnostic, but rather punitive in a vague attempt to identify "failing" schools, without any useful data being produced as to how to improve instruction in all schools.

Districts have also not consistently informed parents of their right to opt-out their students. Some districts provide forms, some districts tell parents to use the form of the ODE site and some districts have not informed parents of their right to opt out at all. Grant insisted that we use their form, but repeatedly changed the contents of the form. If we did not doggedly educate ourselves as to our rights and then pursue those rights, opting-out would have been impossible.

It is imperative that Oregon steps back from the precipice of the assessment boondoggle and takes time to examine Smarter Balanced's methodology, construction, goals and costs. Moreover, educators, parents and students must have full transparency into those issues. I implore you to support these bills.

Sincerely,

Mario Peri
3905 NE 40th Avenue
Portland, OR 97212

