

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing in support of any thoughtful legislation that will serve to shed light on the iniquitous use and abuse of high stakes standardized testing. Those tests (and the coercion and preparation Districts feel compelled to require their teachers to do) have robbed the tax payers of our state of real educational opportunities for their children. I am a veteran high school history teacher (21 years) and the president of my local teachers' association. I am also the parent of two Portland public school graduates. As a parent, I am deeply grateful that my sons (now in their twenties) have escaped the worst excesses of the recent education reforms. If they were still in school, I would opt them out of the Smarter Balanced tests. As such, I am in full support of HB 2655. Do not weaken it. Parents and students have the right to know about the nature of the tests, what possible use will be made of the scores and their rights to opt out. Teachers have the right to know the same things.

Some colleagues and I took the practice Smarter Balanced 11th grade ELA test and found many discouraging and confusing aspects to it. The Smarter Balanced tests are being touted as beyond multiple choice and requiring rigorous critical thinking skills. They are also being sold to Districts as an opportunity to measure student growth.

Here are a couple of my dilemmas (having muddled through the unfriendly split screen online test):

1. It's still multiple choice. In a reading passage, we were asked to click on the sentence from the passage that best answered the question. For this to be entirely valid, wouldn't you think that all sentences would be clickable? They're not. There were only 4 possible answers. And, three highly educated teachers believed a different sentence (not clickable) was a better answer.
2. The writing portions of the test will be corrected by \$13 per hour hired hands – non educators contracted through the testing industry's various subcontractors (like Data Recognition Corporation which happily pronounces on its website, that it's "Testing season".) If these tests are truly to show growth, the paid hand, even if he/she is a reasonably competent essay reader, has no way of determining a student's growth because the test grader DOES NOT KNOW the student. I know my students. And, if a student starts the school year writing D quality essays and ends the year, consistently writing C quality essays, THAT IS GROWTH.

I am very grateful that current legislators in Salem are taking a hard look at the boondoggle of the testing regime being foisted upon schools. HB 2655 will provide the transparency so sorely lacking in the current education reform. These tests are being used to bludgeon students, teachers and parents. I have heard many stories of intimidation tactics used to coerce students to take the test.

Finally, one of the lies being promulgated at various levels is that if schools do not achieve the magic 94.5% testing rate, they will lose their ranking and that colleges won't accept their students. I promptly called three colleges (Reed, Occidental and the U of Oregon) and spoke with admissions counselors and officers. They all three denied the validity of that statement.

There's got to be something wrong when lies are being fed to families to force compliance. Is this really what we want for education?

Sincerely,

Laura Paxson Kluthe

citizen, teacher, parent

Portland, OR