

April 8, 2015

Chair Doherty, Members of the Committee - for the record my name is Kelly Carlisle, Assistant Superintendent of Salem-Keizer Public Schools, and I am here in support of House Bill 2982.

As an educational leader I have seen the benefits of Proficiency, especially as it relates to strong, equitable outcomes for all students. It is with that lens of equity that I wish to address my comments today.

One of the common misconceptions about Proficiency is that it is a grading system, but when all we do is trade one grading system for another, we don't see the shifts in practice that are necessary for all students are to succeed.

Proficiency, in reality, is a teaching methodology, of which only a part is grading. Diane Smith's book published through the BEC Compact entitled *It's About Time* clearly and succinctly outlines the 6 constructs of Proficiency. These constructs are founded upon research-based best practices that should be happening in every educator's practice.

For example, Proficiency requires that teachers select standards and then engage in what is known as "backwards planning" where teachers chunk the instruction in a way that breaks down the skills into discreet learning targets that help students take steps toward meeting those expectations.

Proficiency also incorporates student ownership of learning in that, if well-implemented, it requires students to think at a meta-cognitive level to articulate their thinking about their own learning so that they remain engaged in the process.

Additionally, Proficiency begins to lay the groundwork for more equitable opportunities in the classroom. The reflection construct, as outlined in Diane Smith's book, requires teachers to reflect on their own practice and the instructional decisions they make in the classroom. This reflection is the perfect opportunity for teachers to consider what they should do differently in order to meet the needs of all of students. This is a perfect doorway into culturally responsive practices¹, based upon standards, where ultimately all students see themselves in the instruction, and have a clear understanding of their own mastery levels.

Some may ask, "well what's the difference between Standards-Based Teaching and Proficiency-Based teaching?" The answer is time...standards-based teaching may impact the teaching methodology;

¹ When paired with *Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching: Classroom to Community and Back* by Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko, and Stuczynski, powerful shifts in practice can happen where ultimately all students see themselves reflected in the instruction through intentionally implementing culturally responsive practices.

however, the instruction is beholden to the calendar as opposed to the rate of student learning. In Proficiency, the rate of student learning drives the work, not the calendar.

Opposition to proficiency usually comes from a lack of understanding both on the practitioner's part and on the community's part – this very reason speaks clearly to why we need to make Proficiency education a priority. Even higher education is beginning to see trends in student attrition where straight-A high school students are dropping out half way through their freshman year or are having to take a remedial class because the "A" didn't represent what they learned. The issue of remedial classes, especially in this state where significant population of our students live in poverty, is a major concern because it can become a pathway to inequity and thus working against the State of Oregon's 40-40-20 initiative.

Proficiency emphasizes student learning over behavior so that we know how much a student has learned instead of knowing how proficient they are at "playing school". It also will help the shifts in practice that our students desperately need in order to be successful as active co-constructors of knowledge in the classroom as opposed to the role of passive receptacle as they have been perceived in the past.

A savvy teacher may, all on her own, figure out how to implement a really effective model of proficiency in the classroom. However, down the hall her colleagues may be really struggling with how to make the conversion from one teaching model to the next. What we know about this work is implementation of any instructional practice across a K-12 system, with a consistency and high quality, requires really good professional development and reliable classroom resources. Good work has already gotten underway in this endeavor, and we need it to continue and expand across Oregon. For these reasons I encourage your support of House Bill 2982.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my comments with you today.