

Senate Education Committee
April 28, 2015
Testimony in support of HB 2860-A
Beth Yarbrough, High School Science Teacher, Sutherlin School District

Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Beth Yarbrough, I'm from Tenmile Oregon, and I teach High School Science in the Sutherlin School District.

Oregon teachers spend too much time teaching to the test. Oregon students lose valuable instruction time to preparation for and administration of the high-stakes "Smarter Balanced" statewide assessment instead of practicing creative thinking and problem solving that will prepare them for college and career.

I understand that students need to be assessed. However, that assessment should give me and the students information to know how they are progressing and what next steps would further their learning. With the Smarter Balanced test, I am unable to receive timely feedback that could help student learning. I prefer to use assessments that allow me to quickly determine where my students are in the learning process and what concepts they are retaining and which concepts they need further instruction on. For instance, after learning a new concept in chemistry, I often ask the students to give me a thumbs up, down, or sideways based on their ability to perform the concept alone. If I see several sideways or thumbs down, I know that I need to re-teach the concept. If only one or two thumbs are down, then I can give individualized instruction to those students while the rest of the students work individually on the concept. This gives me data immediately to inform my instruction. Unfortunately with the Smarter Balanced test, we are using up a month or more of instruction time and resources to assess their learning and will not receive their scores back for several months. How does this help me determine the learning of my students?

HB 2680-A will prohibit the use of data from statewide assessments administered during the 2014-2015 school year. The data will not be used to evaluate teachers, administrators, or schools during that time period.

HB 2680 directs the Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a work group to review the current system of assessment and determine a better approach.

As a teacher and member of the workgroup of professional educators who have been collaborating with other educators, school administrators, and leaders from the Governor's Office and the OEIB, I can tell you how much impact we can make by reviewing the previous assessments, analyzing the ability of that test to measure learning, identifying needed adjustments, and making recommendations for future legislation.

Let me be clear: teachers support assessments. We support assessments that work. Teachers are assessing our work every day, assessing students every day, and figuring out how to improve outcomes for our classes and for individual students. Professional educators know what works. By working together, we can create a system of assessment that supports the goals we have in the classroom. We can create a system of assessment that supports teaching and learning.

From an educator who assesses students every day, and who knows what it takes to help students succeed: please pass HB 2680-A and help create a system of assessment that works for Oregon.