

Increased spending on Student Services vs. Standardized Testing

Pre – and Post - Smarter Balanced 2010-14

Rachel Rich, retired teacher, March 14, 2017

Member ODE workgroups writing CIM foreign language benchmarks and standardized tests.

Member 360 Accountability Writing Collaborative

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Changing the Story: toward Fair Accountability and Responsibility in Public Education

1. Findings: Smarter Balanced is particularly detrimental for SPED, ELL and the very young.
2. Other tests are fairer, shorter and less expensive.
3. The Brookings Institution reported that in 2012 -

Standardized testing totaled **\$8.1 billion**

Oregon's totals?

Before and after Smarter Balanced?

For perspective, from 2010-14 Oregon increased spending on

Student services

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1113 – Elementary extra-curricular | \$50,059 |
| 1122 – Middle school extra-curricular | \$3912 |
| 1132 – High school extra-curricular | \$160,875 |
| 1140 – Pre- K | \$226,488 |
| 1210 – Talented and Gifted | - \$196,181 loss |
| 1220 – Restrictive programs for disabled | \$442,655 |
| 1250 – Less restrictive programs for disabled | \$1,006,129 |
| 1260 – Early Intervention (SPED) | \$974,795 |
| 1271 – Remediation | \$518,935 |
| 1272 – Title I | -\$6,228,523 loss |
| 1291 – English Language Learners | \$467,229 |
| 1400 – Summer school | \$4120 |
| 2130 – Health services | \$691,049 |
| 2120 – Guidance services | \$1,560,981 |
| 2140 – Psychological services | - \$376,844 loss |
| 2150 – Speech pathology and audiology | \$919,983 |
| 2190 – Services Directions and Student Support | \$285,341 |

4 year increase in student services: \$505,000 = 25¢ per student per year

To determine which state budget items were test-related, I consulted Smarter Balanced test manuals, Oregon HB 2713 & 2680 audits, an AFT study on test expenses, school principals, test coordinators and test technicians.

4 year increase in statewide district test-related expenditures:

| | |
|---|---------------|
| 121 – Substitutes-licensed – to prep & proctor tests | \$3,887,787 |
| 122 – Substitutes-classified – same | \$2,594,894 |
| 470 – Computer software – system updates for testing | \$26,804,376 |
| 480 – Computer hardware - additional computers | - \$1,095,277 |
| (offset by grants) | |
| 2210 – Improvement of instruction – typically test PD | \$4,084,000 |
| 2660 – Technology services – now typically for tests | \$14,430,357 |
| 2240 – Staff development (paid) typically for testing | \$982,613 |
| (Unpaid test focused staff mtgs. not incl.) | |
| 2630 – Information Services – for increased test data | \$1,500,554 |
| 2230 – Assessment and testing - not from state | \$614,948 |
| 2231 - Records management | \$93,225 |
| 380 – Tech. services - typically for testing | \$8,262,137 |
| 390 – Other tech. services - typically for testing | \$23,896,065 |

Districts' own test-related expenditures increased:

\$86,055,679

2010-14

Budget item 310 for professional development in better teaching,
not testing, **DOWN - \$10,830,571**

Student Services up only **\$505,000 = 25¢ per student per year**

*Students and teachers face more tests and higher expectations,
WITHOUT the needed supports!*

ODE increased test spending:

- ✓ ODE - Air contract
 - 2010 OAKS - \$3.5 M starting point
 - 2014 SBAC - \$27.5M
 - (annual or bi?) x (4 or 2?) years **\$55-110 M**

- ✓ ODE 2009 -14 Race to the Top grant **\$202 M**
 - to develop SB, add personnel, infrastructure

- ✓ Grant expired
 - ODE costs continue
 - At an average \$50 M x 3 years **\$150 M**

- ✓ District costs
 - At an average \$22M x 7 years **\$154 M**

Oregon's estimated increased spending on
standardized testing since
Smarter Balanced:

2010-2017

\$359-616 million!

Depending if the AIR contract is annual or biannual and if the grant should count as part of total spending.

Increase in student services: <\$1 million

- ✓ No records yet on costs to classroom FTE or course offerings.
- ✓ Smarter Balanced manuals show new hires are needed or personnel are diverted from their primary duties to serve as:

- District Test Coordinator
- School Test Coordinator
- Test Administrators
- Regional ESD Partners

- ✓ Districts also add extra data managers, secretaries and tech support.
- ✓ School personnel have shifted upward to the ODE and sideways to test-related positions, further increasing class size and reducing electives.

Is it worth it? From an ODE exhibit, “The Right Trajectory”, even enthusiastic Teachers of the Year concede Smarter Balanced:

- Doesn't shed light on low- to mid- performers.
- Has 2-3x as many difficult questions as previous tests - even 5 years above grade level!

- **Raises expectations by one level - from rubric levels 1 and 2, to primarily 2 and 3.**
- **Reports too vague to guide learning: “Student can solve a range of complex, well-posed problems.”**
- **Rates the suitability of items for students that are from an “excellent classroom” who are “well-prepared”, native speakers, “not disadvantaged”, and not disabled. Excludes half our population? Title IX compliant?**

Smarter Balanced doesn't help real students learn or real teachers teach!

Why renew flawed Smarter Balanced tests?

Rachel Rich, rbeckley58@gmail.com, 3-16-17

Although most states have chosen other tests, as allowed by ESSA, the ODE is renewing the Smarter Balanced contract in June. This despite better options, a budget crisis, shrunken school services, test spending that's boomed by \$359-616 million since 2010, and a plethora of the ODE's own misgivings.

The HB 2713 audit #2016-21 concedes SBAC “results are not well-suited to inform instruction or individual educational decisions at the student level”, “students taking between 18-23 hours”, “additional staffing and resource demands on the entire school”, needing “new staff or substitutes”, “training displaces professional development”, “test administration can take up meeting time at schools”, “testing tied up computers for months”, “less instruction time, fewer support services, and less access to common resources for all students during testing”, “multiple reports of computers freezing and accommodations, such as text-to-speech, not working properly”, “work ...lost”, “anxiety or pressure”, “disruption and stress”, “challenges exacerbated by the length of the test”, “impacts fall hardest on vulnerable populations.”

All this is somehow justified for “systems level ... accountability”, even though SB can't report specific skills or standards for specific students. Teachers don't know if a kid understands decimals, but only “Claim #2 – Student can solve a range of complex, well-posed problems”.

While some deny it, other officials believe the ODE is considering optional SB interim tests and expanded test infrastructure. The same audit says, “A budget note in HB5008 prohibited ... purchasing the full Smarter Balanced assessment package, which includes formative and interim resources, ... missing an opportunity” (p.9). Etc. several more times. One final recommendation is to **“Expand the use of formative and interim assessments” (p.18). According to SB ads, these are “minute to minute, day by day, week by week” or quarterly.** Interim tests take one hour, are mostly hand-scored and require computers for every student (p. 11). All this could double test spending!

The ODE claims Smarter Balanced costs about \$11 million. But they didn't check with school districts about spending on extra hardware, software, substitutes for setting up and proctoring, records management, tech services, increased bandwidth, etc. – items mentioned in Smarter Balanced test manuals and their own audit reports. A statewide comparison of those school budget items, from 2010 to 2014, before and after SB, shows districts increased test-related spending by at least **\$86 M. At an average of \$22 M annually for seven years, district-level testing costs rose \$154 M.**

The 2014 AIR contract shows the test costs the ODE **\$27.5 M** for per-pupil fees, consortium dues, scoring, reporting, data storage, help desks, etc. By contrast, the old test totaled only \$3.5 M. SB was developed after 2010, then piloted statewide by 2013 and variously listed as an annual or bi-annual contract. **Depending, the subsequent two to four contracts would total about \$55-110 M.**

An ODE **2009 grant** application to develop SB shows massive increases in test infrastructure, personnel and training at **\$202 M**. The grant expired in 2014, but costs continue. **At an average of \$50 M annually, the subsequent three years would total \$150 M. That's \$359-414 M out of pocket plus \$202 M absorbed by a grant. We maintain a \$359-\$616 M testing system!**

In 2010 Rob Saxton priced OAKS computerized standardized tests at \$3.5 million. Next, Smarter Balanced was implemented in addition to OAKS Science and Social Studies, the ELPA and kindergarten exams, leading to an explosion of state mandated standardized testing expenses at the cost of programs that directly benefit students. Rachel Rich, retired educator, rbeckley58@gmail.com

A comparison of statewide school budget items before and after Smarter Balanced shows test-related expenditures borne by districts themselves rose by \$86 million from the start of test development to the last year of complete budget records: 2010-14. In addition, over the same four years, the ODE underwent massive expansion in personnel, training and infrastructure to the tune of \$202 million. Accordingly, the ODE bill for test fees jumped from \$3.5 to \$27.5 million annually or bi. Yet the state increased key student services by only half a million, barely keeping up with inflation. Sadly, psychological services, Title I reading assistance and talented and gifted programs lost \$7 million, while teacher professional development unrelated to testing dropped by \$11 million. Testing is now grossly out of proportion to learning.

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| District budget items for key student services | Statewide gain 2010-14: \$505,003 |

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| District Test related expenditures | Statewide gain 2010-14: \$86,055,679 |

310 – Non-test-related professional development **Statewide loss: -\$10,830,571**

- ✓ District costs avg. \$22M yearly x 7 years \$154 million
- ✓ ODE – Air contract, \$27.5M (annual or bi?) x 2-4 years \$55-110 million
- ✓ ODE 4 yr. grant to develop SB, add personnel, infrastructure \$202 million
- ✓ Grant expired, ODE costs continue, avg. \$50 M yearly x 3 yrs. \$150 million
- ✓ **No records yet on costs to classroom FTE or course offerings.** **School personnel have shifted upward to the ODE and sideways to school test coordinators, data managers, etc., further increasing class size and reducing electives.**

Estimated increased state mandated standardized testing costs since Smarter Balance in 2010 \$359-616 million!