

February 1, 2019

Dear Education Committee,

I am writing in support of a revised version of HB 2318. Specifically I agree that the state should not be able to mandate standardized assessments to students in PreK through grade 2. Too often these mandated approaches are implemented without full understanding or fidelity and don't achieve the aim of helping students advance.

But I would like to reserve the right to districts to use such tests as part of a comprehensive system of support for students. Programs such as Response to Intervention are important and effective in early identification of students who may struggle in school. These rely in part on standardized repeated short tests to track some components of student growth. I don't want to tie the hands of districts that use such approaches.

The impetus for this bill came at least in part in response to the mandated use of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. This test is so short and used in such a way that it provides little useful information to teachers. In addition:

1. There is a 12 to 14 month gap in age between students entering kindergarten. This is at a time when skills and abilities are rapidly changing. Unless this age discrepancy is taken into consideration, inappropriate conclusions can be drawn about individual children and cohorts of children.
2. The test assesses only a small part of kindergarten readiness, but this part may assume inappropriate importance because it is universally measured.
3. The test is influenced by many variables that are not included in the score. These include:
 - Ease of working with a stranger (children who have been in preschool will generally do well on this, those who have been mainly in their family setting may not.)
 - Age (is the student just 5 or almost 6)

- Familiarity with the task. While some students may have many pre-reading skills, they may not have practiced naming letters.
 - Preparation for the test situation. Some students may have their parents talk about what is going to happen, others may come in cold.
 - Racial disparity of tester and student. Gender disparity of tester and student.
 - Familiarity with sitting and responding to direction.
5. Having access to these scores may have a prejudicing effect on teacher perceptions of the student. Again, because they are standardized numbers they may assume disproportionate importance, even though this is not intended.
6. As we expand early childhood learning programs, we will look for ways to assess if they are effective. Any number that is available may assume too much importance and be used inappropriately in both assessing and shaping these programs.

Thank you for your attention and service,

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