

February 26, 2019

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I write in support of SB 428, the bill to audit the considerable costs of summative standardized assessments in Oregon.

It is with great curiosity that I observe an educational system that has become increasingly obsessed with the collection and processing of data, yet has shown little interest in examining the true costs of that very system.

It is a very costly system in which testing companies derive great profit and one in which thousands of people in Oregon -- in the ODE and at the district level -- owe their (often, substantial) paychecks to testing, to data collection, to data processing and to policy development based on data. It is a growth industry that is always searching of new financial opportunities, i.e., more testing.

Before addressing the financial costs, first examine the human costs of the standardized testing "outcome based" accountability model: These include race and class-based tracking, discouraging students who ultimately drop out, marginalizing and discouraging teachers until they leave the profession, removing counselors from their role as mental health professionals to serve as de facto testing administrators, and the narrowing of the curriculum in an increasingly "joyless" educational experience.

The system's true financial costs are likewise ignored: The costs of test purchasing, the salaries of the army of "testocrats" in the ODE, the district-level testing administrative costs and the costs of testing coordinators in every school building.

Then there is the loss of teacher time due to all of the testing logistical discussion in school staff meetings, in teacher grade level/subject level meetings, all of the professional development hours devoted to test preparation, all of the teacher time spent in analyzing data in "data team" meetings, and the weeks or months spent in classroom-based test preparation and administration.

Then there is the cost to students and teachers as the curriculum is increasingly narrowed to focus on tested subjects and the increasing dictating to teachers what to teach, how to teach it, when to teach it, how to assess it, when to assess it and how to deal with the mountains of resulting data -- much of it of little value. Why? Because teachers already know which of their students are struggling in a given curricular area.

It is time for us to take an honest look at the comprehensive costs of the data and metrics-based testing system. Oregon taxpayers deserve it. Our children and their parents deserve it. Oregon teachers deserve it.

Please support SB 428.

Respectfully submitted,

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