

To: The Chair and Committee  
Re: SB 1572

As a high school language arts teacher for the past 18 years at Woodburn High School, helping students meet testing/essential skill requirements has been a daunting, time-consuming, and disheartening part of my job. I have been part of various testing schemes in Oregon: CIM, CAM, OAKS and Smarter Balance (in addition to the first years of TAAS and TEKS in Texas).

None of these high-stakes tests accurately measures what students know and are able to do in terms of their literacy and communication skills. Authentic classroom assessments, portfolios, defenses of learning, and grades can supply better evidence of students' ability to demonstrate essential skills.

My school has worked hard to improve the assessment systems we use to measure student learning. This effort at proficiency-based teaching and learning is far from perfect, but it does attempt to allow students the time and opportunities to master essential skills. Differentiated and authentic assessment are well-documented approaches to teaching and learning. For this reason, passing grades on report cards determined by assessments and teacher discretion is a more accurate measure of what students know and can do than a standardized test scored by computer algorithms.

Other testimony on this issue presents the many studies that reflect the inequities and barriers the test as a graduation requirement poses for students. I would add that this requirement also poses a formidable economic, time, and talent burden on high schools to create systems of delivering, scoring, and storing essential skill work samples. Time--before, after, and during school-- must be carved out to create secure systems. Students, teachers, administrators, and school budgets are stressed in service of unnecessary exit exams.

Please add my testimony to those urging support of SB 1572 and the elimination of the unnecessary hurdle of demonstrating essential skills in order to earn a high school diploma in Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Susan Droke