

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I urge you to support SB 702.

Recently, the Oregon Journal of Social Studies published a paper entitled: “From the Field: How Oregon Social Studies Teachers are Preparing Students for the 21st Century”. I will send it to you separately.

This survey of Oregon Social Studies teachers found that “discussions, assignments, and activities that promoted students’ higher order thinking” are curtailed or eliminated due to an overriding emphasis on tested subjects.

In the study, Oregon elementary teachers reported an average of only 2.8 hours per week devoted to social studies instruction.

- 69% of Oregon elementary teachers reported that instructional time for social studies has decreased due to mandated testing in other content areas.
- Only 33% of elementary teachers reported teaching civic responsibility and discussing core democratic values at least weekly.
- Only 10% elementary teachers reported their students learn about the US Constitution or fundamentals of local, state, or federal government at least weekly.
- Only 40% of middle school teachers reported often discussing core democratic values and civic responsibility, and only half the high school teachers reported doing so.
- Only 25% of middle school teachers reported their students often learn about the US Constitution or the fundamentals of local, state, or federal government.

Senators, I don’t believe that teachers wake up in the morning wanting to push a measurable portion of the arts and humanities out of their classrooms. The study clearly shows that excessive testing and the data-driven model of education have produced those results.

In Oregon and across the country, the past 20 years has seen continual decrease in our students’ access to the fundamentals of civics and informed democratic participation. Perhaps we are today witnessing the results.

Please support SB 702. Also, please do whatever you can to eliminate the stranglehold that excessive standardized testing has on Oregon students and teachers.

Respectfully,

Roscoe Caron
Member, Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE)
Member, Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN)