

TO: Members of the House Education Committee

FROM: Deanna Chappell Belcher, parent, educator, PhD student (aka lifelong learner)

RE: In support of HB 2318 "TOO YOUNG TO TEST"

What do we want for the children we cherish?

What do we hope for our own kids, for our nieces and nephews, or our best friend's children who call us "auntie" or by a nickname of their own invention? When we send them off to school, do we imagine them sitting up straight, silently attending to the adult in the front of the room while their rear ends go numb in hard chairs? Do we want them rewarded with junk toys or junk food for their silence and for their compliance? Do we hope for their spirits to be quashed and their creativity to be deadened?

When the most privileged among us are considering their many and varied options for schooling for their offspring, are they looking for the most restrictive and uncomfortable furniture, the straightest rows, the quietness of the kids waiting in lines in the hall before entering the classroom? Are they hoping to see behavioral incentive systems reminiscent of experiments in behavior modification with birds and rats? Are they hoping to send their babies to the schools with the highest standardized test scores, the neatest bubble fill-ins?

No. No, no, no, and no.

When we send our young ones off to school, we envision them among a small group of peers, bent over some very interesting rock that someone brought from home, or excitedly shouting "eeeewwww" as they pull apart an owl pellet. We see, in our mind's eye, our child sharing a big colorful pillow with a new friend as they read aloud from *The Very Little Caterpillar* to each other, we see the lightbulb shine when the pieces of the math problem finally come together. We imagine them running around the playground squealing with delight, the sweet tears falling if they should tumble, their playmates comforting them while the teacher rushes over to be sure the injury isn't too severe.

We want our youngest children to be in nurturing and healthy school environments, loved and cherished by their teachers, excited and engaged in active learning. No test can measure all that, and this obsession with testing in early childhood only turns our preschools and primary grades into tiny stressful pressure cookers for those sweet babies.

Just say YES to HB2318!! Thank you.



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