

Members of the House Education Committee,

I am a retired middle school teacher and I am very concerned about what has happened to public education in Oregon. In fact, it breaks my heart.

I loved my teaching job and I really liked teaching middle school kids. I loved the wonderful mix of humanity in the diversity-rich schools I worked in. I loved teaching in ways that engaged kids in the own learning, that made the promise of education become real for them and that told them that they were intelligent and that their lives and futures mattered.

The corporate “reform” model of education has been the dominant force in public education since the “No Child Left Behind Act” was passed in 2001. Terms such as “accountability-oriented”, “outcome-based”, “data-based” and “standardized testing-based” have been used to describe it.

It watched it produce more damage every year. Things are worse now than ever. As more and more tests are imposed, kids are increasingly treated like “data points”. And the teachers? There are increasingly treated like “data point managers”.

We are now doing to little children what has been already been done to students in grades 3 through 12. Not content with the ever-increasing testing-sorting-tracking of older kids that drives the joy out of learning, now little children are next up to produce endless streams of data, charts, table and graphs.

Where on earth are the children in all of this? What do they feel and experience as they are made to spend more and more time in their seats in drill-and-kill lessons? Where on earth are the teachers who want their students to learn to love to learn?

The testing advocates and testocrats who owe their paychecks to testing and data collection have now identified early education as an opportunity to label developmentally-appropriate practices that nourish children as being somehow “harmful”. They seem to imply that time for creative play, for exploration, for joy are somehow wasteful and getting in the way of meeting the next academic goal and benchmark.

The testing-data-collection industry has taken over early childhood education, saying that this sacrifice is necessary to meet some imposed from above data-base reading goal by third grade... or first grade, or the first week of Kindergarten!

This model of education has been an unqualified failure, taxpayer money has been squandered and great damage has been done to students, teachers and families.

Please have the courage to be the leaders who finally say, “Enough!” Let children be children, let teachers be their teachers. Please support the “Too Young to Test” bill.

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