

Graduate School of Education

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To: House Education Committee

From: Dr. Will Parnell, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Department Chair for Curriculum and Instruction, Portland State University; Dr. John Nimmo, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education; and, Dr. Ingrid Anderson, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education

RE: Written Testimony in Support of HB 2318

Date: February 1, 2019

We are submitting this testimony as Professors of Early Childhood Education at Portland State University.

It is time for the State of Oregon and school districts to stop wasting important funds on testing and to invest in teachers, the creative tools they need to support their work, and the broader school infrastructure.

As longtime professors in early childhood education, we are convinced that wholesale standardized testing of children below third grade is not helpful, and for many children is detrimental to learning.

Over the past 20 years, an ever-increasing proportion of education funding has been poured into various forms of standardized tests (and associated published curricula) with the following results:

- Young children entering school in fear of school due to entry-point testing. Teachers could easily collect up what these short timed-tests tell us without the waste of time and anxiety-provoking experience of test administration.
- Teachers feeling pressured to *teach to the test*, and as a result not taking the time to be innovative and to use their knowledge of their children to design learning experiences.
- Teachers having less time to devote to classroom-based formative assessments and learning experience documentation that could create a more meaningful and culturally relevant curriculum.
- School systems spending millions of dollars on purchasing and implementing tests, thus foregoing more important resources to ensure classrooms are inclusive, technologically equipped, and well-resourced.
- Misidentifying young children for further diagnostic testing and referral to special education based on poor test measures and inaccurate child responses.
- Problems in tests being able to account for important differences across culture and ability.

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- Promoting a focus on deficit-thinking, rather than being proactive about identifying and leveraging the strengths children may have that do not fit into preconceived notions about intelligence and academic proficiency.

The National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) research literature demonstrates that standardized forms of testing are not developmentally appropriate for children in the early childhood years. Children are notoriously bad test-takers and there can be a wide variation in results from one day to the next based on factors such as their relationship with the person implementing the test and the particulars of the day and setting.

Further, excellent teachers of young children know that they must develop a curriculum that is responsive to children's ideas, questions, and their family and cultural context. To do this, teachers can engage in a range of classroom-based assessment, observation, and documentation activities designed to provide them with relevant information about the strengths and needs of the children in their classroom. Instead of pouring money into standardized tests that rarely provide useful information to teachers about their children *in a timely manner*, funds could be used to the support professional development of teachers in authentic and developmentally appropriate forms of assessment and to provide out-of-classroom time to discuss their findings.

Most assuredly, standardized tests present a reductionist approach to understanding children who are, in contrast, complex cultural beings and citizens who should rightfully want to love learning and school. Testing young children does not offer them this public good.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Parnell".

Dr. Will Parnell, Ed.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Nimmo".

Dr. John Nimmo, Ed.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ingrid Anderson".

Dr. Ingrid Anderson, Ed.D.