

Re: Removal of the Essential Skills Requirement for Graduation

I have worked with high school students for fifteen years, eleven as a language arts teacher and for the last four on a team tasked with re-engaging students for the Beaverton School District. In my experience, I have found that all populations of students have individuals whose test-taking scores do not reflect their intellectual and academic abilities, and students returning to school after having stopped attending, those who deal with issues of mental health, poverty, housing instability and racial barriers, do not need one more impediment keeping them from academic success.

Asking students who have already worked through curriculum in reading, writing and math to present their knowledge and skills all at once in a high-pressure, high-stakes test, is unfair and a threat to original curriculum that is designed to meet students' needs through authentic tasks and activities. The Essential Skills requirement for graduation is not adequate to prove that someone can learn skills, concepts and facts that one would use in a practical application. Regular interaction and ongoing assessment, using good, original curriculum, is what informs educators best about the performance of students.

Sincerely,
Eric passes
Teacher, Beaverton School District