

Testimony to Senate Education Committee - Feb. 6, 2020

I speak today as a 38-year public school teacher retiring earlier than I had planned to, due to the effects of standardized assessment on students in K-12. These tests drastically changed public schools for students and teachers in devastating ways. My last 12 years teaching 4th grade students, I administered both the OAKS and Smarter Balanced Assessments. Time and money wasted on these activities greatly impacted the focus of curriculum, available resources, and the process of teaching and learning. These effects on students and their lives were so drastic that I could no longer in good conscience, do my job. I wanted to apologize to my students but couldn't.

At 4th grade, the expectations for students were 2-4 years above their developmental level. These tests were rolled out with expected passing rates of only 40-45%. Many students have not been successful in passing this test, given in grades 3-8 and 11. This has been their reality year after year.

Sadly, Oregon's public high school graduation rate is one of the lowest in the country, as well as the percentage of high school students able to finish in four years. I feel that the required essential skills assessments have a great deal to do with them dropping out before graduation or taking longer than 4 years. Knowing that there is another hurdle to clear can be very self-defeating to students having had difficulties with the state assessments throughout their school careers.

If high school students are successful in completing all classes and earning the number of required units with passing grades, they should be allowed to graduate. They have proven competence in math, reading, and writing by earning passing grades in those required classes. As a veteran public school teacher, mother of 2 graduates of Oregon public schools, actively involved in advocating for all students, I would urge you all to support the passage of SB 1572 giving school districts in Oregon the power to establish the use of essential skills assessments or requirements as they choose.

Sincerely,

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