

My name is Casey Tiemann. I am a teacher and school counselor in Eugene District 4J. I also am a parent of 3 children in Eugene District 4J.

I have been teaching in Eugene since 1998 when the standardized testing machinery was just ramping up with the "No Child Left Behind" policy. Since that time I have witnessed the morale of teachers decline as they have drastically less input into what they teach and how they teach. More, I have seen students become drastically more disillusioned, and more disconnected from the curriculum and their own sense of purpose. We all know that student level of depression, anxiety, and suicidality have grown exponentially at the same time we have put more emphasis on standardized tests and curriculum. Can we connect the dots?

As a school counselor at the high school level now, I see how our priorities shape our activities. Instead of focusing on the things that matter most - real learning, and relationships in classrooms and communities, teaching real-life skills that incorporate working together, creativity, and even fun - we have reduced schooling to answers on a standardized test. Field trips, projects, and interdisciplinary activities are becoming rarities in our schools. While I understand the desire to standardize aspects of school, I hope we can see that the system is way out of balance. Schools operate with human beings, and the cost of ignoring human needs is proving to be detrimental to the health of our children.

Thank you,
Casey Tiemann
Eugene, Oregon