

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Members of the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN) urge you to pass SB 1583, the bill designed to minimize some of the harmful impacts of mandated standardized testing in Oregon.

For years, Oregon teachers, parents and students had held the current Smarter Balanced Consortium (SBAC) in low regard. The criticisms are legion: These tests take weeks away from instruction time; the data is of no use to teachers; the curriculum has become over-weighted to tested subjects; too many teachers have left the profession – not wanting to be forced to teach to the test; students have been sorted and tracked according to family income and ethnicity; precious resources have been wasted.

The 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows states to apply to be an “Innovative Assessment Pilot” state to develop an alternative statewide system of local assessments to meet the federal assessment requirements. Currently, New Hampshire, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia and Massachusetts are doing so.

Thus, a number of states have implemented a system that has made meaningful strides in freeing students and teachers from the oppressive, lifeless and failed system of Smarter Balanced testing. Thus far, the ODE has made no meaningful efforts to take advantage of this opportunity.

Left to its own, we see no sign that the ODE has a purposeful desire for our state to create an assessment system that truly engages students; that is not stultifying in its lack of creativity; that taps and honors the innovation and passion of teachers; that actually addresses years of complaints from parents, teachers, students and taxpayers.

We have lost our way and we are mired in a failed system.

SB 1583 will direct the ODE to begin what should have begun in 2015 when the ESSA became law.

So much time has been lost. So much damage has been done by the punitive, time and resource-wasting Smarter Balanced system. No, we can't unring the bell. But we can finally begin to change what should have been changed years ago.

Please pass SB 1583 and please actively support its passage in the Senate.

Sincerely,
Members of the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN) Steering Committee:

Margi Brown
Roscoe Caron
David Crandall
Scott Hayes
Gregg Heacock
Kathleen Jeskey
Larry Lewin
Liz Marlia Stein
Ross Swartzendruber
Mary Thamann