

To Members of the House Committee On Education,

As an English Language Arts teacher and reading specialist with 32 years of classroom experience, teaching students and adults at all levels, presenting professional development workshops for teachers, I have recently served on the Oregon Battle of the Books High School Title Selection Committee and am now working as a substitute teacher in the High Desert Education Service District, where the negative effects of summative statewide testing are undermining teacher effectiveness and sapping student interest in what they hoped education might offer.

I know the importance of formative assessments and have designed lessons in phonics that help students see into words to discover letter patterns associated with certain sounds. Recognizing these patterns allows students to see if they meet conditions that determine which inflective endings are appropriate. Working with many disadvantaged high school students and with adults not familiar with these patterns, I know the value of teacher those skills needed for students to develop fluency and comprehension in their reading and to develop an understanding of grammar, rhetoric, and logic that allow them to recognize subtext in what they read and to create it in what they write. You might think that this is what the SBAC is designed to promote. Though this is not the case, I know many who would pay good money to purchase IT learning packages in the belief that they will address students' diverse needs so they have an equal chance to learn. As I have worked in classrooms where teachers have been provided with lessons and students are offered IT exercises in a "blended" learning experience, I see a top-down approach to learning that I thought was discarded decades ago.

What's lacking is a sense of agency—that which is at the heart of every individual, struggling to understand how to negotiate their existence in this world. Instead of learning how to observe carefully, think critically, and enjoy discovering ways of communicating with each other, students are distracted by their IT devices, divided from what they could learn from each other and from those who have been hired to present them with lessons designed to challenge and excite them. Unfortunately, they are not the only ones who have been deprived of experiencing agency in creating something that others would appreciate: their teachers now find themselves in a soulless profession, where they have no opportunity to discover methods of their own to share with one another as part of an academic community.

Strangely, this is the dystopian outcome Madeleine L'Engle predicted in her Newbery Medal winning children's book, *A Wrinkle in Time*, where a "whole planet must conform to the terrifying rhythmic pulsation of IT, a giant disembodied brain." I found this summary online—something the internet has freed us to do—research and explore.

SB 1583 offers us a respite from the rhythmic passing out a hodgepodge of lessons designed to prepare students in the exercise of finding right answers on a test in which their worth will be judged. I can't think of anything more dispiriting!

It is time to get off the treadmill and discover what can be learned when teachers and students are free to ask the right questions and seek answers that allow them to explore how what's inside them connects them to the world around them.

I urge you to support SB 1583!

Gregg Heacock