

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

We write to you in support of the SB 302-1 provision to audit standardized assessments administered to Oregon kindergarten students. We believe that an examination of kindergarten testing is appropriate and overdue.

Most standardized testing in Oregon is district-mandated, not federally or state-mandated. Many legislators, parents, and taxpayers are not aware of this. According to the ODE's HB 4124 (2022) report, at least \$47 million was spent in the 2022-2023 school year to purchase commercially-produced district-mandated tests. This does not include the cost of professional time required to prepare, administer, analyze, and discuss test results.

In spite of over two decades of extensive use of standardized tests as a primary tool to increase student achievement, and in spite of spending hundreds of millions of dollars in purchasing costs alone, student achievement in Oregon, and in much of the country, has not changed appreciably according to the annual National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, the "National Report Card".

It is time to re-examine the testing-centered "accountability model" that has been in place since the passage of the No Child Left Behind law in 2001.

Among our concerns for kindergarten students is the steady movement away from research-based developmentally-appropriate early childhood education practices. We are concerned about the impacts of the now-ubiquitous "one-size fits all", "kindergarten is the new first grade", testing and data-based model of education, most especially when applied to the youngest of students.

We believe that a comprehensive audit of kindergarten standardized testing should examine and include input from teachers and administrators on testing impacts on instructional time, curriculum, teachers' professional judgment, social and emotional well-being of students, along with payments to testing companies.

We believe that a comprehensive and meaningful audit of kindergarten standardized testing in every Oregon district should include:

- Which tests are mandated to be given to kindergarten students in each district, how often are they administered, and for what purpose?
- What is the monetary cost for purchasing these tests?
- How much money is spent each year on building-based and district-based testing coordinators?
- Are any kindergarten district-administered tests mandated by any law, in which subjects, and how many times per year?
- How often are students given test-score-determined remediation outside of their classroom?

- How much of their class instruction time is missed and in which subjects when they are outside of class?
- How many students in any given month are given such remediation?
- How much time, on average, do kindergarten teachers spend in gathering and reporting testing data, and in attending testing data meetings?
- Are there any subjects that are minimized in order to prioritize Reading and Math instruction related to district-required testing?
- What do classroom teachers think about the utility, extent, and impacts of district-required testing?
- Does district-required testing have any negative impact on teacher job satisfaction, well-being, or turnover?
- Has district-required testing improved Reading and Math proficiency in the past decade?
- Does district-required testing have any negative impact on how students feel about reading or on their self-confidence and emotional health?

We believe SB 302-1 should specify that kindergarten assessments to be audited are (1) “administered... by school districts” and (2) “mandated... by school district policy”. This includes assessments where decisions about (a) whether to assess, or (b) what instrument to use, are made by administration at the building level or higher, and are not subject to teacher discretion. It does not include assessment decisions made by individual teachers or teacher teams.

Members of the Senate Education Committee, we believe that the taxpaying public deserves to know the costs and effects of kindergarten district-mandated testing.

We believe that the impact on student social and emotional health of the data-and-testing-based model of K-12 education deserves to be surveyed and publicized.

We believe the impact of the data-and-testing-based model of education on a holistic and developmentally-appropriate curriculum deserves to be surveyed and publicized.

Respectfully,

Members of the OPEN Steering Committee,

Margi Brown	Mikell Harshbarger
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