

Respected Members of the Education Committee,

As you work on the legislation concerning educational change, please consider some of the issues with the Smarter Balanced Assessment. This test is supposed to be computer adaptive by next year. You are probably aware of some of the difficulties that occurred last year in the pilot test. This year many Connecticut towns are giving the field test, which is not yet adaptive. Who knows what will happen! This is the test that is linked to student progress, teacher evaluation and district success.

There are many questions that still surround this test. Some of the questions that remain unanswered are:

How valid and reliable is this test?

Is it developmentally appropriate?

Has anyone looked at the correlation between typed answers and hand written answers?

I know as a teacher that many of my students in grades 3-5 are not proficient at keyboarding skills. When they have to create a word document it is shorter than hand written work. This will affect the amount of what each student is able to produce for the test. Another related area is the open ended reading response questions. In the practice test that I took, no spell check was available. When I personally took the test, I typed the word crab as cab. Is this type of error going to make the whole answer wrong? If I were hand writing the word, I would not have made this error! Given these issues, when a test provides a score to a teacher and a parent, what will it mean? How are teachers supposed to use flawed data?

We are set to give the field test soon. I feel like I am at the old time carnival games where you know the games are rigged against you; however, in this case the stakes are higher and the teachers and districts are forced to play.

Sincerely,

Pamela Peter-Cohen

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