



Testimony of  
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***SB 380 An Act Concerning Exclusion of Student Performance Results  
on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations***

Education Committee Hearing  
March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee: my name is Roxanne Amiot and I am the Automotive Department Head at Bullard-Havens Technical High School. I am testifying today in favor of SB 380. Every teacher understands that an evaluation is part of our work expectations. We understand that administrators want data to support the evaluation. However, in many cases the data provided by standardized testing is not only irrelevant to the teacher's job performance, it is misleading.

My experience with having standardized testing used in my evaluation has been frustrating to say the least. Last year, because literacy was a school goal, the STAR reading test was used in my evaluation. My students were tested at the beginning of the year and then again at the end, and 22.5% of my evaluation reflected the growth in literacy. Yet as an automotive teacher, I played very little role in the growth of their literacy skills. My students went to the literacy lab one period a day when they were in shop, and of course had English during their academic cycle. My students' growth in literacy had much more to do with their teachers in those classes, but was part of my evaluation as well. Because there is no appropriate test that could be used to show growth in automotive, one quarter of my evaluation has nothing to do with my teaching.

This year, after numerous complaints from my union and the trade teachers about the use of literacy and math tests, the district decided to use the SKILLS USA career readiness test. While this change may seem to make sense, the results are even more ludicrous. Questions such as "Identify the salad fork in the diagram below" -- an actual question from the test -- does not give any information on my success as a teacher. Not only is it culturally and economically biased, it is irrelevant to my teaching responsibilities.

No one actually believes it is relevant or important. By statute, we must use a standardized test, so we do. We waste our students' time and give them this test simply because the evaluations have to get done. The requirement to use standardized test scores in teacher evaluations have made the evaluation system itself a waste of time and effort for everyone, and takes the focus off our true mission to educate students. Teachers do not mind being evaluated, but the evaluation has to make sense to be productive. SB 380 is a step to having an evaluation system that has relevance to my teaching performance. I urge that you support this bill. Thank you.

I am writing in support of SB 380 because I believe that the overwhelming majority of teachers would like for their evaluations to be permanently divorced from state mandated standardized tests. Their reasons are as diverse as they are. Some feel that standardized tests are flawed to begin with or that standardized testing leads to standardized teaching and standardized students. Many teachers wonder if standardized testing is at odds with teaching students to innovate and wonder why we are not focusing more instructional time on creative rather than formulaic methods. Many resent the loss of authentic and meaningful learning time. Some realize that while their own influence on children is great, it is not as great as the influence of many other factors including but not limited to poverty, language proficiency, home life, learning disabilities, level of parental involvement and education, and access to proper facilities and technology. Many people also are appalled at the cost of implementing this bureaucratic structure...most of which falls upon the towns to implement and therefore the local taxpayers.

The belief that standardized test scores are a good measure of teacher performance is wrong on many levels, but even if they were a decent measure, the problems with implementing this linkage are mind boggling in complexity. Implementation couldn't even begin until you answered the following questions:

1. Which tests do we use? Currently, there is the Math SBAC test, the Language Arts SBAC test, the Science CMT test, the Science CAPT test, the SAT test, and the NAEP test.
2. Do we use the SBAC math test scores to judge the most recent math teacher or all of the math teachers that have ever taught the child? Do we use the SBAC language arts test to evaluate the previous English teacher or the child's entire lineage of English teachers? Should the teacher of non-English speaking students be given credit for the fact that many of her students don't speak English as their native tongue?
3. How do the scores of those tests reflect the teaching ability of all of the other types of teachers in the school such as social studies, world language, special ed, music, art, health, tech ed, P.E., etc...and how will that 22.5% rating be calculated?
4. How *is* the 22.5% calculated? Is there a mathematical formula that connects individual students' scores to their individual teachers or do entire schools receive a single score that is then somehow translated and inserted into the evaluation rubric for all teachers at that school? If every district has a different kind of evaluation rubric, then who decides how the score is converted from student test score into teacher evaluation score?

The answers to the questions above are very unclear to the teachers who are being evaluated. There exist underlying questions about the wisdom of connecting student test scores to teacher evaluations. It is time to face the fact, as the federal governments seems to, that many of the underlying assumptions of No Child Left Behind were unworkable and based on a top down, accountability model. Educators know however, that the best way to improve education is locally, using authentic and appropriate methods of appraising students as well as teachers.

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WHEA President