

Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House Room, 111
Boston, MA 02133

Rep. Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Madame Chairs:

I am a middle school teacher in the Weston Public Schools. Weston is an extremely affluent district with outstanding schools, students, teachers and resources. I have had the honor of teaching in the district for the past 5 years.

When I first arrived in Weston I was in awe of the truly elite teaching team in my school, many of whom had earned national recognition for their excellence. The students were even more impressive than their teachers! I found myself humbly teaching middle school Latin to Junior Olympians, award-winning artists, headlining musicians, genius mathematicians and accomplished scientists. Weston Middle School is, by any measure, an exemplary school.

Five years ago standardized testing felt like an occasional nuisance to both teachers and students. Now it has grown to dominate our school and its culture. Pearson's PARCC test debuted in our middle school this year. PARCC managed to turn our faculty meetings into PARCC training sessions, our library into a testing center and technology storage facility, our librarians and tech staff into the genius bar at Best Buy, our teachers into test proctors, and our school into a Pearson test prep center.

High-stakes standardized tests, like the PARCC exam, are now tied to educator and school evaluations. I now overhear some of the finest educators in the country lamenting the fact that they teach lower-level classes. It is heartbreaking to watch our finest teachers in a state of despair, knowing that their great work with the school's most vulnerable population will be completely disregarded. Instead, they will be given an inferior evaluation based on the lower test scores of their students, compared to their colleagues who teach advanced classes. As a result, some of our best teachers are being penalized for choosing to work with the students who need them most.

The PARCC, and other standardized tests, dramatically impacted the precious classroom time I have with my students. Since I teach multiple grades, I was expected to proctor these tests in each grade. While I was administering the PARCC test to 8th-graders in my classroom, my 7th-graders were sent to various rooms for study halls. Not only did my students miss the classes that conflicted with all of the testing, they missed the classes that conflicted with my proctoring

schedule. There is something seriously wrong when making sure 13-year-olds are sitting in total silence for 4 consecutive hours a day supersedes actual instruction.

Weston represents the best-case scenario for PARCC administration. We have iPads for every student and high-quality servers to support the demands of the test. Under these nearly ideal conditions, our students still lost full weeks of classes.

As a teacher, father and product of the Massachusetts public school system, I cannot continue to subject children to this endless and meaningless testing. Our children have the right to a public education and should not have that right impeded in order to line the pockets of the Pearson corporation.

For all of these reasons, I am in support of H340, An Act relative to a moratorium on high-stakes testing and PARCC, filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge), and request the Committee report it favorably from Committee as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

John Bracey, Middle School Latin Teacher
Weston Education Association

cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff
Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair
Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair