

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 apologize for not having time to craft perhaps more compelling testimony, but I've been proctoring tests this week. At this very moment, my fourth-grade class may be finishing its final District Benchmark testing session. Here are some testing totals you may find alarming:

Districtwide Test Sessions _16__
PARCC Test Sessions ___8___

Now, we've all heard the claims that these tests only disrupt part of the day, part of a building, or other minimizing comments. As a teacher in a public school building that is over one hundred years old, I can tell you our entire school is impacted. We all tiptoe around, avoid bathroom use, reschedule the little time our students have for art, music, physical education or outdoor time. Test-takers with accommodations move to spaces all over the building. Then we have the makeup sessions for those that were absent. Field Trips have become too difficult to schedule around all the testing.

Many teachers remember when elementary students would greet them with, "Do we have gym today?" or "Do we have art today?" Now the most frequently asked question is, "Do we have a test today?" And too frequently the answer has been YES. Any school expects to have a certain amount of tension during testing season, but now it's always testing season.

After all these years we can still match scores to ZIP codes. This can't be about teacher effectiveness. We need the task force to examine the Commonwealth's high-stakes testing culture. Districts like mine must be released from the testing stranglehold.

Less Testing More Learning!

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,

Lori Silveira
New Bedford Educators Association

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