

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:

Teaching Not Testing!

The kids come to school
All excited to see
What learning's about
And how great it will be.
They are little and new
To this wonderful place
Of classrooms and cubbies
It's there on each face
The nervous excitement
of coming to school
A whole new adventure
This learning stuff's cool!

But now we started testing
These bright little faces
Measuring their potential
It's off to the races!
No more can we focus
on talking and teaching
to each single child
learning whom we'll be reaching.

Instead we have timers
And iPads and tests
To measure their skill sets
Against all the rest.

And those little children
Who make up this tale
Have quickly been measured
And are starting to fail.

Aimsweb and DIBELS
The dread TSGold
The data that's gathered
Is too much to hold
It's sent out on the net
To some far away place
The details and photos
Of each little face.

In the first weeks of September
We already know
Who are the fast kids
And who will be slow.
All those eager small learners
With eyes open wide
Are a little diminished
Have lost some of their pride.

Maybe Joe doesn't know his letters just yet
He wants you to listen
While he talks of his pet
And Maya is terribly terribly shy
It's a big step forward
When she can say Hi

The need for more data
Absorbs much of our time
There's less left for learning
About rhythm and rhyme.

Think back to the days when you were a kid
The things that you liked, and all that you did.
Was your teacher collecting data each day?
Or talking and teaching during your play?

Did she sit in a corner, with one child at a time
Checking and writing down if you can rhyme?
Or showing you letters that you have to name
And trying to figure out who is to blame?
When you don't know the letters
And you can't go as fast
As the kid just before you
He certainly passed.

Would you have been worried,
Maybe wanted to cry?
If you couldn't do what she wanted
No matter how hard you try.

Would you begin thinking
This place isn't fun
I'm not really happy
I might want to run
Away from the testing
And the constant refrain
Let's measure your progress
Check the growth in your brain.

Teaching small children is really an art
It takes passion and caring
A very kind heart
A large dose of patience
Thrown in for good measure
And it once was a job
That gave teachers great pleasure.

We need to return to what really is best
Teaching each child
Instead of teach to the test.

Although my remarks
May sound rather light
Don't be mistaken
This is a serious fight.

At stake are our children
Their future, their lives
Having schools where learning
And opportunity thrives
Teachers are speaking up
Loudly and long
This mania for testing
Is simply JUST WRONG!

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.

Heidi Lahey, M. Ed. Special Education
Houghton Elementary School, Sterling Massachusetts
cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff

Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair

Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair