

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:

My name is Jason Mosall and I teach 5th and 6th grade band at Chestnut Hill Community School, a public school in Belchertown. My colleagues and I are fortunate to have a very healthy music program that includes more than 60 percent of the school in either band or chorus, and a general music program that includes all students. My bands include more than 160 students yearly, with 2 grade levels. The majority of instruction involves 'pull-out' lessons in which I see small groups of instrumentalists for one half hour lesson per week.

At the beginning of this school year, our school made drastic scheduling changes which dictated large blocks of time when music lessons could not take place. In these blocks, teachers were forced to subject students to much longer lessons in Math and English than ever before. Science and Social Studies instructional time was greatly reduced. This change was brought about by the new trend of Common Core standards-based education. The result from my perspective is a 30 percent reduction in contact time for music instruction. This also prevented me from including some students in the band program at all during the regular school day. I was forced to teach many more lessons after school in order to fulfill my students' needs, making my average school day end around 5:30 pm.

This year, our faculty administered the PARCC, the MCAS and DIBELS. I am unable to teach students when PARCC or MCAS are being administered anywhere in the building. While I do agree that music can be disruptive to testing, I lost the equivalent of 22 classroom days to this testing schedule. I was also a test administrator for 6th grade students and spent 6 classroom days reading a PARCC test script.

The pressures of these tests place unnecessary stress on our teachers and work environment. Since music is not considered a core subject, I have no choice but to yield my instructional time to classroom teachers as testing approaches. This puts Arts and Specials teachers in a position of conflict with our set goals and curriculum. It also puts us at odds with other educators, who would ordinarily let us work with students whenever needed. The quality of our performances has suffered from this lack of contact.

My greatest fear as a music educator is that the arts will be quickly bullied out of the picture by these tests and their preparation. An education that includes the arts should be a basic right for public school students, and the testing frenzy will take us further from this ideal.

I do see the value of standardized testing, but only when it is developmentally appropriate, reasonably brief and yields meaningful feedback. It is for these reasons that I wholeheartedly support HB 340. I look forward to a future when students and educators are fairly evaluated and are able to teach without the shadow of these arbitrary benchmarks. I look forward to my colleagues receiving feedback that will inform their teaching methods. We need to take back our classroom time and reduce testing. *Less Testing, More Learning*. I thank you sincerely for your time.

Jason A Mosall

CHCS Band Director

cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff

Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair

Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair