February 7, 2012

Members of the Oregon Education Investment Board,
My son is a junior in high school. There are 20-25 kids in his classes and ~240 kids overall in the school. Superb teachers who take them from bridge building to Ashland. No-cut sports and a wide spectrum of other extracurricular activities. Not one poor kid. Not one English Learning Learner. Community supported with a local option levy, a generous foundation, a new grade school and a remodeled high school. So attractive, parents gladly pay tuition $11,900 per year, doubling the state school funding formula of $5900 to maintain their operational spending for each child at the higher level. Indeed, only 50% of operational funds come from public sources.

My son passed all his OAKS test last year. He loves it! He is a Beaverton "transfer student" to Riverdale High School. At a recent community meeting to discuss the new open enrollment policy, it felt awkward when a "tuition parent" asked me why our family doesn't donate the difference.

In the tight/loose arrangement of outcomes based budgeting, will the affluent Riverdale School District feel the clamps because 100% of their kids are not proficient, perhaps not "college/career ready"—especially since there are 6 (7?) dropouts? Really???[1]

How will the QEM work with the new "sustainable baselines of funding for all educational entities and investment models that encourage innovation and reward success" as Tim Nesbitt writes about in recent testimony submitted to the legislature?

Should administrators' salaries be considered in outcomes based budgeting? In most recent statistics, the top salary in the metro was nearly $250,000 for retired BSD superintendent Jerry Colonna.[2] Beaverton accounts for 11 of the top 36 listed.

We left Beaverton because my son was bullied and his academic needs weren't being met. He was at risk of dropping out in 8th grade—and certainly not on a college/career trajectory.

I had been on the Language Arts and Literacy Adoption committee his 6th grade year. When we began discussions of middle school textbooks, a question was raised whether supplemental materials covering conventions of writing was necessary. "This is optional?" I asked. My son was not learning with peer editing and other new "best practices". I wonder if Beaverton's learning targets for proficiency-based learning (e.g. "*Demonstrate correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and knowledge of grammar/usage appropriate for grade level*")[3] have improved outcomes for kids there since then.

Before the mathematics debate was "settled" by the National Mathematics Panel[4], there was the Oregon Math Leadership Institute, OMLI. OMLI had ten participating school districts, including

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[1] http://schools.oregonlive.com/district/Riverdale/
[2] http://schools.oregonlive.com/salaries/
[3] *www.casamples.com/downloads/OR-**Beaverton**-6-8-AW.pdf*
[4] http://www.nctm.org/news/content.aspx?id=14136

Beaverton.[5] Curriculum and pedagogy was "constructivist." Group learning and discovery mathematics didn't work well for my son. I knew that kids with autism spectrum disorder were worried about this curriculum and pedagogy. That's why I made an attempt to disaggregate results [6] comparing OMLI elementary schools with a non-OMLI school that had similar demographics and were within one mile of each other. Better results at the non-OMLI schools.

Math coaches were more like police in trying to maintain "fidelity" for this research project. So, with approval from Superintendent Colonna, I "home schooled" him for math during his actual mathematics class (a class led by an OMLI coach), generally finding a quiet corner on the stage with the band instruments. The district did not share the OMLI research with parents.

Project Oregon Formative Assessment Resources[7] has been running for almost 3 years. Is there any evidence that the U. of O developed easyCBM has improved outcomes for any Oregon students? Or is the 5th grade Hispanic student in the BSD taking the easyCBM (one of 57 standardized tests these children generally take) for no good reason?

Parent and community stakeholders must have a voice in the education of their children. Around five years ago, the BSD began a data warehouse. The BSD is a member of the Project ALDER data warehouse governance committee.[8] I have asked for the Project ALDER data sharing agreement that has been submitted to the Attorney General's office in December and have not gotten a reply from Project ALDER staff. I worry about confidentiality and I worry about conclusions made when research is not well designed or validated.

It seems that elected and appointed leaders are not asking about the financial, opportunity, educational and societal costs of reforms that are promulgated nationally. Dr. Yong Zhao, University of Oregon's first Presidential Chair for Academic Extension[9], outlines these concerns so well in his blog, "Ditch Testing." [10]

High stakes testing isn't going away with achievement compacts. I am extremely concerned that Oregon's waiver was submitted well before the February 21st deadline so that lawmakers would feel compelled to pass legislation that averts the punitive "accountability" of NCLB.

This should not be the reason we divert more money to new, untested "accountability" measures and unrealistic 40/40/20 outcomes. Invest in classroom teachers, quality curriculum and after-school programs that nurture creativity, collaboration and critical thinking!

Respectfully,

Kris Alman

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[5] http://ormath.mspnet.org/
[6] http://kathyandcalvin.com/some-background-beaverton-math-struggle
[7] http://ofar.orvsd.org/
[8] http://alder.orvsd.org/content/data-warehouse-governance-committee
[9] http://education.uoregon.edu/feature.htm?id=2794
[10] http://zhaolearning.com/?s=ditch+testing&x=0&y=0

Riverdale Elementary school

	Math							Reading							Writing			Science		
Grade	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**4**	**7**	**10**	**5**	**8**	**10**
District results	78	94	88	88	78	80	89	>95	>95	94	90	92	88	>95	73	82	88	>95	91	85
Riverdale Grade School	75	93	90	90	79	81		>95	>95	>95	92	92	88		70	76		>95	92	

Riverdale Middle school

	Math							Reading							Writing			Science		
Grade	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**4**	**7**	**10**	**5**	**8**	**10**
District results	78	94	88	88	78	80	89	>95	>95	94	90	92	88	>95	73	82	88	>95	91	85

Riverdale High school

	Math							Reading							Writing			Science		
Grade	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**10**	**4**	**7**	**10**	**5**	**8**	**10**
District results	78	94	88	88	78	80	89	>95	>95	94	90	92	88	>95	73	82	88	>95	91	85
Riverdale High School							90							>95			88			82

District data

Students in class of 2011	Percentage of on-time grads	Number of dropouts	Total students enrolled	Students on free or reduced lunch	English language learners	Teachers' average experience	Teachers with master's degree
66	88%	7	566	0%	0.0%	13.6 years	90.5%

Click on a school name to see graduation data and other information about the school. Also, you can click on a column header to sort the list various ways.

School	2011 class size	Special education diplomas	Enrolled for 5th year	% of on-time grads	Number of dropouts
Riverdale High School	49	0	1	86%	6