

My name is Betsey Runge.

First I would like to state that I am only speaking to that which I have seen at the elementary and middle school level.

I have two children 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the Montessori program at Garden Oaks elementary and 6<sup>th</sup> grade at TH Rogers middle school. My children have excelled in their test scores because they have been taught by teachers who care about their individual learning and achievement. Two things are certain – for them, the volumes of testing have increased beyond their useful purpose and they have never learned by taking more tests.

I strive a world where

- All children are welcomed without pre-conceived ideas of performance
- Where a child's needs are met individually
- Where a teacher's main focus is imparting knowledge from a well-constructed, holistic curriculum
- Where principals evaluate staff by monitoring their teaching (I still think management by walkaround is a sound practice)
- Where bureaucracy stops at administration or, at the lowest, the principal level.

I imagine that every day the staff would say "Is this in the best interest of the child's education?"

Think of the psychological development of children. Through the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, these are children to be nurtured. On any particular day they

may or may not do well on a test. The stress induced state of the teachers and administration makes my 6<sup>th</sup> grader roll his eyes. We shore them up with “you are smart children – just do your best.” Their response - can’t we tell the teachers – just do your best in teaching?

How do you get there?

Take the tests out of the **evaluation process** for the teacher and administration. Test scores should be utilized at a high level to determine schools with great needs of support.

Evaluate teachers on their teaching skills and provide them needed mentoring and development.

We should provide support to all children based on their individual needs and monitor their growth toward the full educational requirements. The TAKS test should not be the only assessment tool.

In closing –

I found more relevance in the re-assurance provided by my children’s teachers as to their academic strength than any of the numerous test scores they brought home. That is quality teaching.

The irony is that the state-mandated tests have caused us to put in global measures, when the intent was to educate one child at a time. I encourage you all to get back on mission.