

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

I am Lorie Navarro an educator of 7 years. I teach English Language Arts at the high school level and am here with Valley Inter-Faith. It is with great honor that I am able to stand before you today.

Hannah one of my students in my English III class earned grades of 90 and above in each one of the six weeks reporting periods. Her ideas and insights challenged her classmates to a higher level of learning. She not only met each and every one of the criterion for English III, but also encouraged her peers to do well in every assignment that was given. As with all of my students, she was nervous about taking the exit level TAKS tests. In preparations for this test, she along with another one of my students, Andrea, attended the many TAKS tutorial sessions offered by the school.

The test came and went and yet each and every day that went by, they worried about the TAKS results because they knew that they needed to pass each and every one of the exit level tests in order to graduate with their high school diploma. When the day finally arrived, Hanna learned that she needed one – only one point to pass the English Language Arts test.

Andrea came to me in tears and shaking, "Mrs. Navarro, I did not pass the Social Studies TAKS test. I studied, went to tutoring and now I am going to have to take a TAKS history class. I'm passing all of my classes. What if I can't graduate because of the test?"

Another one of my students, Jose said to me, "Mrs. Navarro, I know I am not going to pass the TAKS again. I have been looking for a job now because I am old enough. I think I will just drop out."

His other teachers, his counselors, and I tried to intervene. I wish I could say that he stayed in school. He didn't.

And Jose is not unique. In Linda McNeil's *Contradictions of School Reform: The Educational Costs of Standardized Testing*, she makes the case for an increase in the rates of drop outs as a direct result of the high stakes tests. Jose is part of the new generation of these drop outs—he's a good kid, who just happened to be victimized by the test, like so many others have.

These types of stories are too numerous to mention. One test should not measure if a student has learned objectives covered in class. One test and its level of accountability should not dictate if or how much monies a school earns.

Therefore I stand with Valley Interfaith in the belief and ideas about how the system can be changed. Take the high stakes out of the tests, and we keep kids like Jose in school. Leave the high stakes as status quo, and we'll continue to have many more Joses.