

My name is Michael Rene Balderas. I am currently an educator with the Edinburg School District. My teaching experience entails working with students from 3-20 years of age. Currently though I am teaching at the Middle School level. I am ~~here~~ here with Valley Interfaith and appreciative for your time in listening to our concerns with the state's current accountability system. I need to make it clear I am not against testing. We need some form of accountability. But what we are currently doing does not work! I believe that's why we are here today; we realize that there is a problem. Some points of concern are.....

- We currently have a system that hurts kids! Students are literally getting sick during, before and after. I am here to personally justify to that statement if need be.
- We reward those that do well on the test and criticize those that don't. Student growth is not accurately measured by this one test alone.
- Funding for districts and schools should not be based on this test alone neither should any notion of teacher pay.
- Teacher evaluations are affected by the results of the test. The exam is a major reason we lose our educators. Teachers come into the classroom with so much enthusiasm and hope that they will have an impact on students, maybe as a teacher might have impacted them at one point. A former co-worker I taught with resigned when he realize that the test is all we teach, our system lost a valuable educator.
- Our students going out to the workplace freaking out because they lack the skills they need to be successful. After all, they are only taught the test. That's why we need multiple measures of assessment, in order to allow time to teach the actual subject and incorporate life skills.
- After teaching the test all year long and force feeding bench mark exams time and time again we finally take our exam at the end of the year and honestly teachers and students shut down. The learning stops! Therefore we suggest moving up the needed "assessments" to the beginning of the year. Let's get it over with and then just teach!
- From my personal experience in school, I don't even remember the test. I remember Mrs. Carlson bringing in a local weather man to teach us about hurricanes. I remember learning about the life cycle through growing plants in Mrs. Sanchez class. I was taught public speaking skills and tapped into my passion for public policy when I was in Jr high, through great teachers. Now classes such as that don't exist, and if they do they are being used to teach the test or they have all become TAKS classes, I don't remember the test growing up!
- We need to remove the labels; we need multiple measures of assessment for evaluating student performance.
- We are hiring professionals whose specific job duties are to work with the TAKS. It's a waste of resources.
- Tests like this are forcing our student to hit the private sector for an education we will end up eventually segregating poor kids. I thought were beyond that.
- We need a system that fosters student authentic work and measures that work. Portfolio assessment and other forms of genuine student work that helps students become curious, creative problem solvers.

Ladies and Gentlemen I love the business I'm in. As a parent and professional it pains me to see our system suffer. As a country we know were behind. But remember Texas is looked at as the big brother when it comes to education. Other states look at us, they model us. Just like a big brother right or wrong, they do what we do. We need to lead this great state by example. We admit we have a problem, we swallow our pride, and we fix it. We owe it to students! Again I thank you for your time.