

Good morning, Senator Shapiro, Representative Eissler and members of the committee. My name is Leticia Duarte and I have been an elementary school teacher for fifteen years. Presently, I am the Spanish Language Enrichment teacher at an elementary school in Edinburg, Texas. I work with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade recent immigrant students. My students are 9, 10 and 11 year olds who are dealing with a new school, home, country, culture, and language.

One would think that with a title such as “Spanish Language Enrichment” I would be maintaining or enriching my students’ home language as they are learning English. However, what I have been instructed to do is prepare my students for the Spanish TAKS. I have to put aside all that my students are dealing with as new students in this country, and focus on teaching TAKS.

For example, I work with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from 8:00 until noon, teaching TAKS Math, Reading, and Science. I feel very uncomfortable with this because I feel I am not helping my students to become successful citizens of their new country. I should be teaching my students about the culture of the United States, the history of the country, the law, and especially the language; yet, none of this is important because they will not be tested in these areas. Although, these are not tested items, I believe they are important and have tried to integrate all of this into our Reading class. However, I have found that very difficult to do. I only have four hours per day to prepare my 5<sup>th</sup> grade students for the Math, Reading, and Science TAKS. Many of them have never taken a TAKS test before, so I have to dedicate a great part of our class time to teaching TAKS taking strategies.

I question myself often if I am making a difference for my students. I wonder if I am preparing my students for the real world. Am I preparing them to be productive citizens of our country? I feel sad when the answer to all my questions is no. I simply prepare my students for a high stake test in Spanish.