

Good morning, Senator Shapiro, Representative Eissler and members of the committee. My name is Sary Longoria and I have been teaching 4th grade for 10 years. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before your committee this morning.

One of my concerns with the high stakes test administered to our public schools here in Texas is the label that is placed on our schools. I understand the intent of this move was an incentive to produce. The intent was good, the result is not... It has become very competitive and has placed a lot of pressure on superintendents, principals, teachers, and most of all our students. Because of this, schools have turned to hiring TAKS coaches.

My district has hired TAKS coaches to work with several campuses in an effort to get the campuses a Recognized or an Exemplary recognition. The job of this TAKS coach was to supply campuses with weekly benchmarks and to gather data from the ongoing testing. I feel that the money spent on this TAKS coach could have been used for our students. Because we had a TAKS coach, we had to administer benchmarks as much as two and three times a week in an effort to become an EXEMPLARY school. This work to become exemplary has become an unbearable task. It has had the effect of narrowing the curriculum to only the objectives on the TAKS, has reduced teachers to test-driven mechanics, and children to testing robots. The sad result is that this whole culture has left many teachers with minimal time to teach.

In my classroom, my students are not competing against other classrooms, or other schools. They are competing against themselves to show growth. Why do we need to label the schools? My suggestion is that we drop the labels and measure growth in an environment free of placing judgments on schools and students.