

April 8, 2011

The expansion of standardized testing foisted upon CMS students this spring has disrupted learning and troubled parents, teachers and community members.

Many parents are especially outraged that all reports indicate that our children were subjected to ill- prepared tests riddled with poorly composed questions, as well as errors. This demonstrated an appalling lack of respect for our children and their time. They are children, not lab rats.

It is clear that CMS's pay-for-performance process is being rushed along far faster than it should be. At a time of budget cuts and layoffs, we should not be spending time and money on unproven fads. It is time to hit the pause button.

We call on CMS to suspend the summative exams scheduled for May. In addition, we call on the school board to take the money designated for this testing program in the 2011-12 budget and redirect it to reducing teacher layoffs. Finally, we call on state legislators to respect the concerns of our community and refuse to support HB 546, the bill that would enable CMS to implement its pay for performance plan despite these community misgivings.

The MecklenburgACTS petition challenging this expansion of testing and its use in pay for performance has gathered nearly 1,500 signatures in the past six weeks and more than 1,000 in the past three weeks alone. In the past few days, we have gained 100 signatures a day. These signatures come from Republicans, Democrats and independents, and represent 129 of CMS's 178 schools. The top-signing schools, which include Torrence Creek Elementary, Providence Spring Elementary, Park Road Montessori, Cotswold Elementary, Old Providence Elementary, Randolph Middle School and East Mecklenburg High School, are scattered through the county.

We parents want our children in their classrooms being taught by their teachers, not being "supervised" while their teachers spend time giving tests. We want art, music, PE, ESL and EC teachers doing the job they were hired to do, not being pulled away from their students to give tests.

The actions of CMS during the past year, starting with November's school closings vote and continuing through the decision to radically expand standardized testing, have led a broad swath of our community to doubt that CMS's policies promote the best interests of our children. A pause would give all of us the time to reflect further on the kind of education that will help our children succeed, and to devise ways that we can work together to ensure that success.

www.MecklenburgACTS.org