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Dear UTLA Chapter Chair,

We have attached the following letter as a possible response by members in case administrators attempt to direct and/or pressure them to give periodic assessments despite our boycott.

The purpose of the letter is for these members to let administrators know the educational rationale for the boycott as well as their individual commitment to implementing an educationally sound and authentic assessment strategy with their students.

Please make your chapter aware that if harassed, members should inform you of such behavior and give this letter to their administrator.

This letter is one tool among many to build unity and organize your site around the periodic assessment boycott. Other ideas are to schedule regular and frequent chapter meetings and keep in contact with grade levels and/or departments for discussions about issues and concerns that arise.

Sincerely,

A.J. Duffy
UTLA President

Dear _____,

Thank you for your inquiry about how I, a professional teacher, utilize assessments to inform my delivery of instruction.

As you well know, the most important consideration in assessing students is whether or not the assessment is ***authentic***. The educational research is replete with data generated from the works of researchers such as Darling-Hammond, Aness, Falk, Gardner, Oakes, Wiggins, and NAEP (to name a few) that discuss this concept in detail. Basically it defines authentic assessments as, “strategies that require that students demonstrate what they can do in the same ways that workers do in out-of-school settings: by performing tasks that are complex and require production of solutions or products.” It also involves, “particularly in early grades, teachers observing and documenting students’ work and learning in reading, writing, and speaking in the authentic context in which they live and learn.”

This is why the California Legislature included in Education Code 60602 an exhaustive statement of “Legislative Intent.” In this section you will find (A)(8) which states, “Minimize the amount of instructional time devoted to assessments administered pursuant to this chapter.”

Thus, I focus my assessments:

1. On tasks that are contextualized, complex intellectual challenges involving the use of students’ knowledge with the goal of requiring the development and use of meta-cognitive skills (i.e. the stages in the process of learning in which the student understands his or her own preferred approaches to a task or problem to be solved).
2. Evaluating the essentials of performance against the State’s performance standards that are clearly expressed to the student (i.e. “What should you know and be able to do?”).
3. Helping students develop the capacity to evaluate their own work.
4. On requiring students to present their work publicly and orally so that their learning is deepened by reflecting upon how they will frame an idea/concept so that others can also understand. The goal is the student being able to demonstrate mastery of the idea/concept.

I concur with the researchers who believe that we need to strive for “ ‘individually configured excellence,’ enabling students to find and develop their unique talents, to build from their experiences and strengths a strong scaffolding for extending their work and thinking.” Externally developed assessments like the District’s “Periodic Assessments” do not accomplish this work and take too much time away from learning. ***Testing is not teaching*** and I will continue to provide my students with instruction which is standards based and assessments which are ***authentic***.

Sincerely,

Given to:

Date:

Time: