

May 18, 2005

One Teacher
Bethel School District 403
Spanaway, WA

Tom Seigel
Superintendent
Bethel School District 403
516 176th Street East
Spanaway, WA 98387

Dear Sir:

Though this letter represents the thoughts and passion of only one teacher, it is a message that has been heard throughout the corridors and classrooms of every building within the Bethel School District. The message is: "Stop...enough is enough!" While it is difficult to imagine enduring more of the incessant double-speak handed down by this district's administration, I know I must. Who else will serve as a buffer for children, demoralized by the endless succession of tests? While increasing numbers of students fall further behind, all in the name of mandated pacing models, we stumble through multiple, neoteric curriculums fresh out of the box.

Never mind the emotional setbacks suffered by special needs children who happen to be light-years behind their peers academically;

never mind that while IEP's stipulate assistance to special needs children in a variety of methods on standardized tests, there is no such help allowed on the assessments forced upon them;

never mind that the regular dose of WASL "practice tests," Houghton Mifflin tests, CMP tests; Trailblazers tests, LAP qualifying tests, and a host of other "assessments" consume, ironically, precious instructional time;

never mind that the expectations have increased ten-fold, while resources have remained stagnant;

never mind that district-level personnel and, in many cases, building administrators are thoroughly detached from the realities of the classroom;

never mind that morale among Bethel teachers is as low as this writer has ever witnessed;

never mind that the emphasis on "pacing" supercedes the value placed on the mental and emotional wellness of children;

never mind that the creativity bursting within gifted teachers is all but stifled by the unattainable objectives of a paranoid few who sit in board rooms;

never mind that as long as a superintendent's face is splashed upon every issue of Bethel Pride, the emphasis will be less on the hearts of children and more on stadiums, swimming pools, and testing;

never mind that as we grow to love these children over the course of a year, we become fiercely protective of them;

and, consequently, the students in our charge provide the impetus for letters such as this.

I am neither a BEA officer or leader, nor do I intend to impact collective bargaining issues with the submission of this letter. I hold no special distinction as an educator since the vast majority of my colleagues love children every bit as much as I do. My conscience, however, will not allow my voice to stay silent, for it echoes the words spoken eloquently among my colleagues throughout the year.

Sincerely,

One Teacher

cc: All Bethel Schools