

Statement by Wade Tillett, Chicago Public School Parent and Teacher.

Bubble (Pro)test Press Conference

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Federal Plaza, Chicago

Bubble Over

It's time for bubble tests to be over. Instead, learning must bubble over with the strengths, interests, and personality of each student.

A bubble, like the ones floating around here today, is a film of soap inflated with air inside. A bubble test is a set of questions given to students where they choose one of a number of answers by filling in the circle, the bubble, that corresponds to the answer they think will be counted as correct. Which kind of bubble do you think is best for eight-year-olds?

The basic problem with bubble tests is this: it turns each, unique human being into a number. After that, the brutality is abstract. Things are done to those “numbers” without any thought as to who that person is.

For example, under the direction of Mr. Duncan, my son is supposed to take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, also known as the ISAT. My third-grade child would then be ranked in relation to other students and might have to attend summer school based on his ranking. That's right. Despite the fact that he has received outstanding grades and feedback from teachers throughout his first few years of school, if he fills in too many of the wrong bubbles he will not go directly to fourth grade. We've had enough.

You can't measure learning, creativity, or anything else of real value with bubbles. Because of this fact, the current ideology that makes use of bubble tests dumbs down what is taught, limits creativity, encourages competition between peers, penalizes students, teachers, and

schools, and focuses on students' "weaknesses" instead of their myriad strengths.

The real measure of education should be made by each of us, both personally and socially, by the lives we lead, the meanings we hold, and the moments we share. That is the greater purpose of education - to enable each of us to determine who we want to become, and then to help us in that becoming.

The souls of ourselves and our children are at stake. We will not let our children be turned into numbers that trump their humanity. We will not let our children's educational future be determined by arbitrary policies that do not take into account the living, loving, learning human beings they effect.

My wife and I have informed Chicago Public Schools that we don't want our son to take the ISAT this year. We are following in the footsteps of Jim and Sue Gill who opted their children out in Oak Park. We urge other parents to write their schools and opt their own children out of high-stakes standardized tests. We urge all educators to act now to create a new vision of education. We urge Mr. Obama and Mr. Duncan to remember, when they are making each decision, that students are flesh-and-blood, breathing, caring, feeling human beings. They are our sons and daughters. They are people, not numbers.

The high-stakes test bubble has burst. It's time for bubble tests to be over. Instead, education must bubble over with the strengths, interests, and personality of each student. Learning must bubble over with life.