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SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I must say in all honesty that I approach what we're doing with LB 812 with a high level of skepticism even to this day. But I want to be sure at least at this stage of debate that I understand thoroughly and completely what it is that Senator Bohlke and the committee are recommending and what it is the Department of Education is recommending. To give you a little background, I guess my skepticism derives from what I perceive to be at least my own historic view of how things kind of go in educational reform. I remember back starting as early in the sixties the educators were reforming everything to be relevant, to have relevant material, to have up-to-date stuff that the kids really loved. Now, of course, there was something to be said for that since all the material that had been used, I think Dick and Spot or Spot and Jane, Dick and Jane and Spot and Puff were still in use in the 1960s, if I remember right, and things were a little old-fashioned. But the complaint that came out of that wave of reform was that, yeah, we got relevant; but we kind of neglected the core stuff. The businessmen started complaining about spelling and reading and writing and being able to fundamentally express yourself and to do fundamental math. So then we kind of went back to that and refocused on that a little bit. And then in the seventies and the late eighties we got into critical thinking skills and higher learning skills and some other ideas about reform in the education system. And once again, what happened it seemed to me was a fundamental undermining of core curriculum. And the lesson that I think I learned from all that is we need to do more. We need to keep up with relevancy. We need to definitely work on higher learning skills and those things that come above and beyond the basic information gathering of the core curriculum. But we can't do that at the expense of the core curriculum. And I think a part of what has happened in recent years is a serious undermining of public confidence in the public school system because we don't...we haven't paid enough attention to students doing well in those things that the public considers absolutely essential to an American education. When I campaigned last time around, I used the catch phrase, the core and more; the core and more, not more at the expense of the core. And so my skepticism about what is occurring today is whether we are getting to an assessment system and a system to