

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 27, 2000 LB 812

they should, and they tried to make sure that children knew exactly what was on the test and that they could test well. Now, whether the children could test well or not really at that point no longer, in my view, became an information base to determine whether the kids knew anything. I used to cram for tests in school and after I took the test sometimes I couldn't even tell you what day it was let alone what I had answered on the test. I always passed, but I didn't know anything. I can't tell you that I really knew anything after I got through with one of those experiences. And to then say that that becomes the model that we want in our public schools and promote it as something...as a system that actually derives information for us that we can use, as state policymakers, that begins to be a bit of a stretch for me. Now, there are difficult issues to answer about whether or not school districts, if left to their own devices, will prepare or use tests that are appropriate to know whether kids are learning anything in their schools, but I've come around to the point that we have a far better shot at that than we do the alternative model, because we've already seen the alternative model in operation in a number of states and I can't say as it's really worked. Now, I understand that there are people who have become greatly focused on accountability. They want to know how much we're spending in a building. They want to know how much we're spending in a classroom. They want to know how much paper clips cost in the superintendent's office. All that seems to me to be just a little bit of an overfocus on that kind of activity. What we're far more interested in is whether children can graduate and know how to read, know how to write a coherent sentence or paragraph, maybe even a complete story or thesis. That's the reason...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...I'm willing to support the writing test that Senator Bohlike is presenting. I think that allows us to test for a number of things that aren't just pure knowledge. It is understanding that we would test for and, after all, I think understanding is probably the most critical skill, along with a good dose of curiosity, that you can obtain in school. It doesn't make any difference whether we know how many paper clips are in the superintendent's office, and it doesn't make any difference if we know that a teacher can teach Johnny and Susie