



Early Life Child Psychology & Education Center, Inc.

*Dr. Gary T. Thompson*

February 21, 2016

Re: Objection to HB 164-2

Utah State House of Representatives  
House Education Committee

Dear House Education Committee:

I am writing in regards to HB 164-2 on behalf of my five African-American children, as well as the hundreds of mothers who have graced the halls of the pediatric clinical/education child psychology clinic that I co-founded with my wife. This Bill will require all public school children in the State of Utah to take the SAGE assessment test, eliminate the option of parents to opt their children out of taking the test, and will mandate the usage of SAGE as a primary determinate for advancement in early elementary school grades, as well as graduation from Utah public high schools. The passage of this Bill will have far-reaching negative academic, psychological, ethical, economic, and legal consequences that will haunt our State for generations.

I have devoted my life to the research, study and ethical clinical usage of emotional, cognitive and academic achievement tests to assist parents, schools, and courts with making life-altering decisions for children. During my Doctoral Internship and Residency, I gained an intimate working knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the incredible technology and psychometric qualities embedded in the algorithms of the computer adaptive tests that are now the foundational basis of the SAGE test at issue of this Bill.

The psychometric algorithms imbedded inside the SAGE test are remarkable, cutting edge, and unlike anything our generation has seen or experienced in our lifetime. As a local clinical community scientist, I have spent many hours enthusiastically reading peer reviewed studies from my colleagues over the past 8 years in anticipation of utilizing computer adaptive assessment of this nature for children in my community, as well as my own children. I am a strong advocate for the ethical and prudent usage and inclusion of technology in efforts to assist ground level teachers with serving the academic needs of children in educational settings. The next 4 years will see innovations in this area that will be awe inspiring, as well as ground breaking in nature.

Despite my scientific enthusiasm and support for the inclusion and integration of psychometric tools, such as the SAGE test, in the academic lives of my children, and the children of my neighbors in my community, ***I beg you both as father, and a Doctor of Clinical Psychology, to never let this Bill see the light of day. My strong objection is not based on personal politics, and obviously has no basis in a “fear of technology”.***

This Bill must not pass for one reason, and one reason only: It is still in its developmental/experimental phase, and has yet to be validated independently for its intended purpose. ***Without a shadow of a doubt, the corporation that the Utah State Office of Education chose as the vendor for the SAGE test (American Institute of Research), has launched the most expansive, massive, unethical experimentation on public school children ever witnessed in the history of Utah.*** Clinical psychology is replete with tragic, historical examples of the dire consequences associated with experimentation without the informed, written consent of its human participants. To pass a law which takes away the right of parents of protect their psychologically vulnerable children from the adverse, and well documented effects of high stakes, experimental assessment of any nature, is irresponsible, unethical, and dangerous.

One needs to look no further than the State of Florida to see the chaos, harm and damage associated with the AIR produced Common Core test currently being utilized for purposes of grade advancement, and teacher evaluations. In closing, on behalf of the parents of African American, Latino, Divergent Learning, Special Education, Gifted, Anxious, Depressed, Suicidal, ADHD, Autistic, and emotionally vulnerable children in the State of Utah, ***I respectfully request that the House not only allow parents to opt out of the SAGE test, but encourage them to withdraw their children when they witness excessive signs of distress associated with experimental, high stakes testing.*** In addition, I ask that no high stakes, experimental test produced by a corporate vendor, validated or not, ever be given the “respect” of being tied to grade advancement or high school graduation.

Using our kids as experimental laboratory rats, without the informed written consent of parents, to achieve “career and college readiness” is unethical by any professional standard, and is a direct affront to our God given and Constitutionally protected right as parents to protect, raise and nurture our children without invasive governmental interventions. Please vote “NO” on HB 164-2. ***“Parents are, and must always be, the resident experts of their own children.”***

Respectfully Submitted;

Gary Thompson, Psy.D.  
Retired Father of Five Divergent Learning Children  
2016 Candidate-Utah State Board of Education-District 10