

Data provided here at the legislature this year indicated a dropout rate for high school students in Minnesota of 14.1 percent. My information suggests that for those states which have exit exams perhaps 10 % of the students do not receive diplomas, in addition to those who drop out. If the same figures were to apply to Minnesota, this would mean that approximately one in four high school students who enter ninth grade would leave without a diploma..

We are told that we should leave no student behind, that we should prepare all students for the 21st century, that we should prepare all students for the global economy. What I do not understand is how having one in four of our students each year not receiving a diploma is not leaving them behind, is preparing them for functioning adequately in the 21st century, is adequately preparing them to function in the global economy.

Related to this point, I do not hear from the governor's office, from the legislature, from the business community, their plans to help these students who are wandering around without a diploma

Second, high stakes exit exams are put in place we are told so that a diplomas mean something. We are further told that a student passing these exams should be better prepared for college, for the work force, for the military than those who do not pass these exams.. Most states which have put these exams in place have done nothing to

validate that these exams do what they purport to do. And for those states which have done studies, the results are not encouraging. The State of Ohio has had these exams since 1994 and has done no studies to my knowledge to validate these exams. The State of New York can only indicate after many years of having exit exams (called Regents exams) that the scores on these exams are higher now than they once were. The State of Massachusetts did a study to examine the number of their high school graduates who were taking remedial courses in college prior to the use of exit exams in that state compared to the number of high school graduates from that state who were taking remedial courses in college after exit exams were put in place. They found no statistical difference. The State of Texas did the same type of study and found that there were more students taking remedial courses in college after the exit exams were put in place in Texas than before they were required for graduation.

We talk about accountability so often in our country and state. Students should be accountable, parents should be accountable, teachers should be accountable, administrators should be accountable, others in the educational system should be accountable. Why should states not be accountable? Why should states which put high stakes exit exams in place not be called upon to show that these exams are doing what the states indicate they will do. How can we deny diplomas to students based on their not passing exams which we “think” are valid measures of what they purport to measure but for which we have no meaningful research evidence to support our beliefs. That is not rigor and that is not accountability, tenets which we hold so dear for our students at the present time.