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# Background

### Definition

Wikipedia, no date, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standardized_test> DOA: 11-1-15

A **standardized test** is a [test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Test_%28assessment%29) that is administered and scored in a consistent, or "standard", manner. Standardized tests are designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standardized_test#cite_note-Sylvan-1) and are administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standardized_test#cite_note-Popham-2)

Any test in which the same test is given in the same manner to all test takers is a standardized test. Standardized tests do not need to be [high-stakes tests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-stakes_test), time-limited tests, or [multiple-choice tests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiple-choice_test). The opposite of standardized testing is *non-standardized testing*, in which either significantly different tests are given to different test takers, or the same test is assigned under significantly different conditions (e.g., one group is permitted far less time to complete the test than the next group) or evaluated differently (e.g., the same answer is counted right for one student, but wrong for another student)

### History

#### No Child Left Behind (NCLB) started the movement toward standardized testing

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

President George W. Bush’s signing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 ushered in the current era of high-stakes testing. The law required states to administer math and reading tests every year to students from third to eighth grade and imposed increasingly harsh punishments on schools that failed to make “adequate yearly progress” on these tests. By 2011, according to [the Center on Education Policy](https://cdn1.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/Rk_hOxKILWykJgmdMrsgzJ1jJBs=/800x0/filters:no_upscale%28%29/cdn0.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_asset/file/3332906/54YTG.0.png), almost half of schools nationwide were labeled as “failing” because they could not make adequate yearly progress.

### Opposition to Testing

#### Groups opposed to standardized testing

[Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/whitehurstg), [Martin R. West](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/westm), [Matthew M. Chingos](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/chingosm) and [Mark Dynarski](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/dynarskim), January 8, 2015, The Case for Annual Testing, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/01/08-chalkboard-annual-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

That said, this is a perilous moment for reauthorization because of the backlash against standards, testing, and accountability.  The effort to put “the standardized testing machine in reverse,” in the words of New York mayor Bill de Blasio, has diverse bastions of support.  These include: conservatives who object to the seemingly ever expanding reach of the federal government into K-12 public education; concerned parents of children in well-regarded, often suburban schools, who believe that test-prep activities have narrowed the curriculum and put undesirable pressure on their children; progressives such as de Blasio, who see the challenges of public education as best addressed by more funding for schools and broad efforts to eliminate poverty rather than by holding schools or teachers accountable for results; and, teacher unions that are doing what unions are expected to do by trying to protect the less effective of their members from the consequences that follow from exposing their ineptitude in the classroom.

#### Many parents opting out of standardized testing

Kelly Wallace, April 24, 2015, CNN, “Parents All over US ‘opting out’ of standardized student testing, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/17/living/parents-movement-opt-out-of-testing-feat/> DOA: 10-25-15

Since one of my daughters is taking the public school state tests for the first time this year, I thought I paid fairly close attention to the debate surrounding the tests themselves, and the concern that schools are too focused on "teaching to the test."

I heard that some parents might engage in a form of civil disobedience and "opt out" -- they would refuse to let their children take the tests. I thought only a few were making that stand.

But then I learned from a friend whose daughter attends a Long Island school that only two kids in her third-grade class took the test. That means 20 or more of her classmates didn't.

I saw local media reports about similar stories in other schools on Long Island, in New York City and its surrounding areas, and in upstate New York.

Something bigger is going on, I thought.

Just how many students opt out this year won't officially be known until this summer when the state education department releases test scores. But, according to one of the groups leading the opt-out movement here -- the [New York State Allies for Public Education](http://www.nysape.org/allies.html" \t "_blank) -- 156,000 students refused to take this week's English exam, and that's with just from 50% of the districts reporting their numbers.

With approximately 1.1 million students eligible to take the tests in grades 3-8 in New York, that means at least 14% of students are projected to sit out this year. According to the state education department, last year about 49,000 (4%) didn't have a known valid reason for not taking the English test and 67,000 (6%) didn't take the math exam.

"I'm ecstatic," said Bianca Tanis, a co-founder of the New York opt-out group. "I guess I'm not really surprised, because I think we could all feel this coming."

#### Political support to reduce testing

Edward Graham, a student at American University in Washington, D.C., is an intern with The Durango Herald, October 31, 2015, Durango Herald, Bennet Supports Limits on Standardized Tests, <http://www.durangoherald.com/article/20151031/NEWS01/151029672/Bennet-supports-limits-on-standardized-tests-> DOA: 10-31-15

A new push by the Obama Administration is asking state lawmakers to limit the number of required standardized tests in order to better maximize student learning. Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., who previously served as the superintendent of Denver Public Schools, agrees that school testing has gotten out of hand, and he says states need to better differentiate between necessary assessments and ones that serve no educational purpose.

“We need to reduce the amount of unnecessary testing,” Bennet said Monday. “The tests that help us know how our schools and teachers are doing to help kids grow, and the tests that are used for teaching and learning purposes serve an important purpose. If done right, they can provide information we need to ensure our kids are receiving a great education. States and districts should limit the amount of testing for accountability purposes and ensure instruction time is spent teaching our kids.”

President Barack Obama appeared in a White House Facebook video on Saturday calling for an end to “unnecessary testing” and framing the push as a way of providing more free time at school for students to pursue more rigorous learning opportunities.

### Frequency of Tests

#### Students take an average of 8 standardized tests per year and more than 100 during their K-12 years

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

Based on the Council’s survey of member districts, its analysis of district testing calendars, interviews, and its review and analysis of federal, state, and locally mandated assessments, this study found—

In the 2014-15 school year, 401 unique tests were administered across subjects in the 66 Great City School systems.

Students in the 66 districts were required to take an average of 112.3 tests between pre-K and grade 12. (This number does not include optional tests, diagnostic tests for students with disabilities or English learners, school-developed or required tests, or teacher designed or developed tests.)

The average student in these districts will typically take about eight standardized tests per year, e.g., two NCLB tests (reading and math), and three formative exams in two subjects per year.

In the 2014-15 school year, students in the 66 urban school districts sat for tests more than 6,570 times. Some of these tests are administered to fulfill federal requirements under No Child Left Behind, NCLB waivers, or Race to the Top (RTT), while many others originate at the state and local levels. Others were optional

#### Many students take 20 standardized assessments per year

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Students are tested as frequently as twice per month and an average of once per month. Our analysis found that students take as many as 20 standardized assessments per year and an average of 10 tests in grades 3-8. The regularity with which testing occurs, especially in these grades, may be causing students, families, and educators to feel burdened by testing

#### Students also take state and district level standardized tests

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Despite the perception that federally mandated state testing

is the root of the issue, districts require more tests than states.

State tests alone are not to blame for testing fatigue. District-level tests play a role

too. Students across all grade spans take more district-required exams than state

tests. Students in K-2 are tested three times as much on district exams as state

exams, and high school students are tested twice as much on district exams. But

even students in grades that must be assessed per No Child Left Behind took

between 1.6 and 1.7 times more district-level exams than state exams.

Most of the district-level tests in use were interim benchmark exams that are taken

two to four times throughout the year. Other district-wide exams included diagnostic

tests and end-of-course exams for students taking certain required courses.

#### Students are tested an average of once per month, some twice per month

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Students are tested as frequently as twice per month

and an average of once per month.

Testing can occur very frequently for some students. Students in grades in which

federal law requires annual testing—grades 3-8—take the most tests. This means

about 10 tests, on average, throughout the year. But in the Jefferson County school

district in Kentucky, which includes Louisville, students in grades 6-8 were tested

approximately 20 times throughout the year. Sixteen of these tests were districtlevel

assessments. In the Sarasota County, Florida, school district, middle school

students were tested 14 times on state and district tests throughout the year. These

interruptions in instruction may likely be contributing to public sentiment regarding

students being overtested.

Students in grades K-2 and 9-12, who do not take or are less frequently tested

using federally required state exams, take the fewest number of tests—approximately

six tests in a year.

### Norm-Referenced v. Criterion Referenced Tests

#### Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

What is the Difference Between Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced Tests? The terms norm-referenced and criterion-referenced criterion-referenced are technical and represent one reason why people accuse psychometricians of speaking in an incomprehensible language. These terms refer to very different ways in which meaning is attached to test scores. That is, they refer to different ways in which the tests are referenced to something. In norm-referenced testing, a person's test score is compared to (referenced to) the performance of other people who took the same test. These other people are the "norm group," which typically refers to a carefully selected sample of students who previously took the test. There are several types of norm groups, the most common being national, local, and state. National norms refer to a nationally representative sample of test takers. This sample of students is carefully selected to represent key demographic characteristics of our nation. Local norms usually refer to the entire population of students within a school district. For example, local norms on an eighth-grade test would be used to compare one eighth-grade student's score with all other eighth-grade students in the district who took the same test. State norms are used in the same manner, with students' scores being referenced to all other students across the state who took the same test. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 3250-3253). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition…… A serious limitation of norm-referenced scores is that in many cases it is less important to know how well a student did relative to others, than it is to know what a student has or has not learned. For this reason, criterion-referenced tests are much more popular today. Rather than reference a student's test score to the performance of other students, criterion-referenced tests compare students' test performance with carefully defined standards of expected performance. Examples of criterion-referenced scores are classifications such as pass, fail, needs improvement, basic, proficient, and advanced. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 3266-3270). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### “Reliability” and “Validity”

#### “Reliability” of a test

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

Reliability refers to the degree to which test scores are consistent. For example, if you took a test on a Monday and received a score of 80, and then took the same test on Tuesday and received a score of 50, the scores produced by this test are certainly not reliable. Your bathroom scale is reliable. If you weigh yourself, step off the scale, and then weigh yourself a second time, you should get the same reading each time. Such physical measurements are often very reliable. Psychological measurements, such as measuring a teacher candidate's readiness for teaching, are a little trickier. A person's test score could be influenced by the particular sample of questions chosen for the test, how motivated or fatigued the person is on the testing day, distracting test administration conditions, or the previously ingested extra large pastrami sandwich that suddenly causes trouble during the middle of the test. A great deal of statistical theory has been developed to provide indices of the reliability of test scores. These indices typically range from zero to one, with reliabilities of .90 or higher signifying test scores that are likely to be consistent from one test administration to the next. For tests that are used to make pass/fail decisions, the reliability of the passing score is of particular importance. The reliability of a test score is an important index of test quality. A fundamental aspect of test quality is that the scores derived from the test are reliable. Readers interested in the technical details regarding test score reliability should consult any standard measurement textbook such as Anastasi (1988) or Linn and Gronlund (2000). (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 3292-3299). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### “Validity” of a test

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

Validity is different from reliability. This concept refers to the soundness and appropriateness of the conclusions that are made on the basis of test scores. Examples of questions pertaining to test score validity include "Is this test fair?," "Is this test measuring what it is supposed to measure?," and "Is this test useful for its intended purpose?" Validity refers to all aspects of test fairness. It is a comprehensive concept that asks whether the test measures what it intends to measure and whether the test scores are being used appropriately. The validity of test scores must always be evaluated with respect to the purpose of testing. For example, the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) is designed to help college admissions officers make decisions about who should be admitted to their schools. The validity of SAT scores for this purpose has been supported by studies showing the ability of SAT scores to predict future college grades. However, some people question the utility of using the SAT for a different purpose: to determine whether a student athlete should be eligible to play sports in college. Using test scores for purposes other than wha t they were originally intended for requires additional validity evidence.

Another way of thinking about validity is the degree to which a test measures what it claims to measure. For educational tests, this aspect of test quality is often described as content validity. Content validity refers to the degree to which a test represents the content domains it is designed to measure. When a test is judged to have high content validity, the content of the test is considered to be congruent with the testing purpose and with prevailing notions of the subject matter tested. Given that educational tests are designed to measure specific curricula, the degree to which the tests match curricular objectives is critical. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 3309-3313). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Example of the difference between reliability and validity

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

To distinguish between reliability and validity, I often tell the following story. Although many people have trouble losing weight, I can lose 5 pounds in only 3 hours. Furthermore, I can eat whatever I want in this time period. My secret is simple. I weigh myself on my bathroom scale, and then I drive 3 hours to my mother-in-law's house. Upon arrival, I weigh myself on her bathroom scale and, poof!, I'm 5 pounds lighter. I have accomplished this weight loss many times and weighed myself on both scales repeatedly. In all cases, I have found both scales to be highly reliable. Although I hate to admit it, one of these scales is reliable, but probably not valid. It is biased.

### “Standardized Test” Defined

#### “Standardized test” defined

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

What is a Standardized Test? The term standardized test has quite possibly made more eyes glaze over than any other. Standardized tests have a bad reputation, but it is an undeserved one. People accuse standardized tests of being unfair, biased, and discriminatory. Believe it or not, standardized tests are actually designed to promote test fairness. **Standardized simply means that the test content is equivalent across administrations and that the conditions under which the test is administered are the same for all test takers.** Thus, standardized tests are designed to provide a level playing field. **That is, all test takers are given the same test under the same conditions**. **I am not going to defend all standardized tests**, for surely there are problems with some of them. **The point here is that just because a test is standardized does not mean that it is "bad,**" or "biased," or that it measures only "unimportant things." **It merely means it is designed and administered using uniform procedures**. Standardized tests are used to provide objective information. For example, employment tests are used to avoid unethical hiring practices (e.g., nepotism, ethnic discrimination, etc.). (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Location 3221). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### High Stakes Testing Defined

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

HIGH-STAKES TESTING DEFINED It is perhaps important to first be clear about the kind of testing we are considering. To be precise, it is not all testing that is at issue, or even all standardized testing—only so-called "high-stakes" testing. That is, concerns center on tests to which positive or negative consequences are attached. Examples of such consequences include promotion/retention decisions for students, salaries or bonuses for educators, and state recognition of high-performing (or state take-over of low-performing) schools.

#### Tests collect critical information needed to improve education

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

An Achieve (2002) report, Setting the Record Straight, summarized popular sentiment for testing: Despite the claims of critics, testing can and does play a vital role in improving teaching and learning. States that are serious about raising standards and achievement in schools are implementing new, more challenging tests. These tests promote better instruction and provide essential information about student performance that helps everyone in the system improve. States face significant challenges in ensuring that their standards and tests are as strong as they need to be, but the answer is to make them stronger, not get rid of them or put off using them until they are perfect, (p. 1) (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1039-1041). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### Categories of tests

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

Finally, we subdivided the mandatory assessments given to all students in a designated grade into the following categories:

1. *Statewide tests*. These are tests that are typically administered in grades three through eight and once in high school pursuant to NCLB. These assessments are grouped into one of four subcategories: (1) the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), (2) the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), (3) state-developed assessments based on previous standards (2013-14), and (4) new state-developed assessments to measure college- and career-ready standards in 2014-15.

The reader should note that we treat tests in individual subjects in this category as unique assessments. For instance, science may be mandated for all fifth graders but will not be required for fourth graders. Math may be mandated for all ninth graders but reading may not be. Consequently, math and reading tests in third grade are considered to be two assessments even if they both carry the same name.

2. *End-of-course (EOC) assessments*. These are mandatory tests given at the conclusion of a particular course of study usually in middle and/or high school grades, and typically involve tests in such core courses as English language arts, math, science, and/or social studies. The EOC assessments are often used to fulfill course requirements and/or student graduation requirements, but some states also use them to satisfy federal NCLB, state, district, or school accountability requirements. EOC exams in each subject are treated as separate tests in this report. These exams are given by course, not by grade, but this report associates courses with a particular grade. For example, Algebra 1 is associated with grade nine.

3. *Formative assessments*. These assessments are often mandatory—but not always—and include short-term tests developed by the PARCC/SBAC consortia, states, school districts, commercial publishers, and the like. They are administered to students periodically throughout the school year to assess content mastery at various points in the school year. The assessments are often given every three to six weeks and may be either cumulative in nature or discrete, covering one, two, or three instructional units per subject area. They are generally distinguished from benchmark or interim tests by their emphasis on content that has been most recently taught. Formative exams in each subject are treated as separate tests in this report.

4. *Student Learning Objectives (SLO)*. SLOs are typically mandatory and are designed to assess student growth and gauge teacher effectiveness in otherwise untested grades and subjects (e.g., health, physical education, music, art, zoology). SLOs are commonly pre- and post-assessments used to determine student academic improvement over a designated

period and set annual teacher expectations. SLOs in each subject are treated as separate tests in this report, but pre- and post-tests are counted as a single test.

5. *Other mandated state or district assessments*. These were assessments that may be mandated for an entire grade level but are not included in one of the other categories.

a. *Mandated college-readiness assessments*. These included but were not limited to assessments designed to predict college readiness, such as the ACT, SAT, PSAT, ACT Plan, ACT Explore or ACT Aspire assessments, and were only counted when they are required for all students in a particular grade. (Otherwise, we consider these tests to be optional.) These assessments sometimes serve multiple purposes, such as satisfying high school graduation requirements or assessing eligibility for National Merit Scholarships, etc.

b. *Interim or benchmark assessments*. These assessments are defined as those given two or three times during the school year to measure student progress. The assessments are commonly administered once in the fall, winter, and spring. Sometimes these assessments are computer adaptive, or they are used as screening devices for students. In addition, these assessments are often subject-specific, and districts have the option of purchasing or requiring various subjects independently. For instance, a district might require reading but not math. Examples include but are not limited to such tests as: the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP), Scholastic Reading/Math Inventory (SRI/SMI), Renaissance Learning’s STAR Reading/STAR Math, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), etc. These assessments differ from formative assessments in that they generally do not assess the mastery of content. They are typically designed to measure changes in a student’s overall skills.

c. *Nationally normed-referenced assessments*. These assessments are standardized measures that are typically developed commercially and are designed to determine how students taking the tests compare with a national norm group. They are sometimes used as screeners for gifted and talented programs and other purposes. Examples include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and the Terranova test. For this report, these assessments were treated as one test despite the fact that they may include verbal and non-verbal sections or math and reading sections—but they are given at the same time as part of one instrument. In this report, we assume the complete battery of assessments were always administered, so we count them as one test and calculate testing time based on the full assessment.

### Assessment vs. Testing

PracTutor, February 23, 2015, Benefits of Common Core Standards and Standardized Testing, <http://blog.practutor.com/benefits-of-common-core-standards-and-standardized-testing/> DOA: 10-25-15

A test measures a particular behavior or set of objective, while an [*assessment*](http://www.speechandlanguage.com/clinical-cafe/tests-dont-diagnose-you-do-the-difference-between-testing-and-assessment) is the process of gathering data to evaluate an examinee.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999), define a test as “an evaluative device or procedure in which a sample of an examinee’s behavior in a specified domain is obtained and subsequently evaluated and scored using a standardized process,” and an assessment as “any systematic method of obtaining information from tests and other sources, used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects, or programs.”

A test gives student scores, while an assessment provides a diagnosis.

Standardized-tests or standard-based assessment tools are just that, they are not scoring mechanisms that measure classroom learning; they are an [assessment of learning](http://www.education.com/reference/article/why-assessment-important/). They measure and quantify the outcome of the learning process.

# Standardized Testing Good – Educational Crisis

### US Educational System Not Competitive

#### US students not competing with high performance countries

The Equity and Excellence Commission, For Each and Every Child—A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence, 2013, http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/equity-excellence-commission-report.pdf

Today, far too many U.S. students—the future labor force—are no longer competitive with students across the developed world. In the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings for 2009, the United States was 27th in math (not counting states or provinces that were ranked separately from their country).6 In terms of “advanced” performance on math, 16 countries produced twice as many high-achievers per capita as the United States. Indeed, in mathematics, only one in four of America’s 52 million K-12 students is performing on par today with the average student in the highest-performing school systems in the world—which are now in Singapore, Hong Kong, Finland, Taiwan and South Korea.7 If we accept this level of performance, we will find our economy on a low-growth path, because over the past half-century, the economies of countries with higher math and science skills have grown faster than those with lower-skilled populations.8 We will also erode our country’s ability to deliver on its promise of equal opportunity for all its people.

#### If our public schools were competitive, we’d add $20 million to the GDP

The Equity and Excellence Commission, For Each and Every Child—A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence, 2013, http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/equity-excellence-commission-report.pdf

Imagine what we could achieve if we made American public schools competitive with those of a higher-performing country such as Canada in mathematics (which means scoring approximately 40 points higher on PISA tests) over the next 20 years. As our higher-skill-level students entered the labor force, they would produce a faster-growing economy. How much faster? The potential is stunning. The improvement in our GDP over the next 80 years would exceed a present value of $70 trillion.9 That’s equivalent to an average 20 percent boost in income for every U.S. worker each year over his or her entire career. This would generate enough revenue to solve the U.S. debt problem that is the object of so much current debate.

### Black-White Achievement Gap

#### Large black-white achievement gap

Richard V. Reeves is a senior fellow in Economic Studies, co-director of the Center on Children and Families, and editor-in-chief of the Social Mobility Memos blog. His research focuses on social mobility, inequality, and family change. Prior to joining Brookings, he was director of strategy to the UK’s Deputy Prime Minister, November 13, 2015, Brookings Institute, “School readiness gaps are improving, except for black kids,” <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2015/11/13-school-readiness-gaps-improving-reeves?hs_u=SBauschard@planetdebate.com&utm_campaign=Brookings+Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=23741956&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--hH0BNce-NPeNE6g9ENtFW5hxuP03rM4k1TpH5x29-ze8qjlzSd-HlUXBBFhDtojb2zuJ_IfS1SU1IaFtT44NcYx_5W644LF0bgU7TbsneAuQpjsw&_hsmi=23741956> DOA: 11-14-15

There is an encouraging message from a [new paper by Sean Reardon and Ximena Portilla](https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/reardon%20portilla%20school%20readiness%20gap%20trends%2011sep2015_0.pdf" \t "_blank): school readiness gaps are narrowing. But it’s not all good news.

Between 1998 and 2010, inequality in school readiness—in terms of math, reading, and behavior—declined quite significantly, according to Reardon and Portilla’s analysis of ECLS data, being presented today at the [Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management](http://www.appam.org/" \t "_blank) Annual Conference. This positive trend can be seen for gaps in both income and race (or at least, for Hispanic-white differences).

Given that school readiness [strongly predicts later academic outcomes](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2014/01/27-gaps-in-early-childhood-school-readiness-achievement" \t "_blank), these findings bode well for social mobility. They also suggest that other research from Reardon showing [worsening gaps in K-12 and post-secondary education](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/The-Widening-Income-Achievement-Gap.aspx" \t "_blank) (at least by income) cannot simply be explained by what is happening in the early years.

Caveat 1: Still a long, long way to go…

But there are two big caveats. First, the narrowing of the gap in recent years comes after a significant widening in the two decades prior. As Reardon and Portilla put it, “at the rates the gaps declined in the last 12 years, it will take another 60-110 years for them to be completely eliminated.”

Caveat 2: Least progress on black-white gaps

Second, progress in terms of closing race gaps is uneven. While Hispanic-white differentials in school readiness have narrowed, the black-white gap has shown much less movement. Take the size of gaps in math scores in the years 1998, 2006, and 2010:

The narrowing of the income gap and between whites and Hispanics is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Not so for the black-white gap: “The income and white-Hispanic school readiness gaps declined significantly, while the white-black gap declined less (and not at a rate distinguishable from zero at conventional levels of significance).

Why is the black-white school readiness gap so stubborn?

One possibility is that kindergarten is not such an effective equalizer for black children, or has not improved as much on this front. There is some evidence from Reardon and Portilla’s paper here. Between the fall and spring of the kindergarten year, gaps in math narrow between rich and poor kids, and between white and Hispanic ones. But they actually widen slightly between black and white kindergartners (although from a narrower start), for both the 1998 and 2010 cohorts:

These findings echo studies suggesting there are [race gaps in the quality of experience in early education](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16130546" \t "_blank). It also looks as if rates of pre-school enrollment have risen less rapidly for black children in recent years than for low-income and Hispanic children (though from a high base).

Another chapter, then, in the depressing story of contemporary racial inequalities in America. On household income, child poverty, intergenerational mobility, incarceration, neighborhood poverty, employment, even in in terms of starting school, too many black Americans are being left behind.

# Standardized Testing Good -- General

### Framework – Should Reduce, Not Eliminate, Standardized Tests

#### Should reduce, not eliminate, standardized tests

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

This is not to say that America’s accountability system should be completely dismantled. Politicians and schools can de-emphasize testing while still ensuring high achievement. Student and teacher evaluations can take multiple measures of performance into account. The amount of standardized tests students have to take can be drastically reduced. The fewer standardized tests that students do take can incorporate more open-ended questions that force students to think critically and outside the box.

#### Standardize testing should be reasonable

Randi Weingarten , President, American Federation of Teachers , July 2013, Testing More, Teaching Less: What America’s Obsession with Student Tests Costs in Money and Loss Instructional Time,” <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Educators know the necessity of gauging student learning—they use various assessment techniques throughout the school day. And we support the proper use of standardized testing and sensible ac­countability measures. Educators, parents and others have joined AFT’s efforts to restore the balance between teaching and testing, most recently through our “Learning is More than a Test Score” campaign.

#### The Center for American Progress supports testing, just appropriate use

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Used properly, high-quality assessments can be a valuable tool for teachers to determine where students are struggling, for parents to understand their children’s progress and knowledge gaps, and for policymakers and advocates who need assurance that all students are receiving a high-quality education. We simply need to get smarter about when, where and how we use them.

#### CAP agrees tests are good when used properly

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Used properly, tests are invaluable tools for teachers who want to augment their practice to reach struggling students, for parents who want to understand how their children are doing in reading and math, and for equity advocates who need assurance that all students are receiving a high-quality education. We simply need to get smarter about how and when we use them.

#### American Federation of Teachers (AFT) supports reasonable testing

Randi Weingarten , President, American Federation of Teachers , July 2013, Testing More, Teaching Less: What America’s Obsession with Student Tests Costs in Money and Loss Instructional Time,” <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Last summer, delegates to the AFT convention went on record in support of testing that informs, rather than impedes, teaching and learning, and in favor of studies that shed light on the real costs of testing. *Testing More, Teaching Less* is part of deliver­ing on our commitment to provide guidelines, stud­ies and other helpful information to our members and the broader public about the nature, amount and costs of student assessments. Many other stakeholders have voiced their concerns about the impact of standardized tests and have taken action to curtail overtesting and its consequences. In Texas, lawmakers cut the number of high school end-of-course exams required for graduation from 15 to five, and eliminated the requirement that results would count for 15 percent of a student’s overall grade. The Orchard Park Central School District Board of Education in New York took a stand with a resolution proposing that this year’s state assessments be used for “measuring the state’s progress in introducing the Common Core Learning Standards rather than for measuring student performance or educator effectiveness.” Lawmakers in New Mexico called for an analysis of the cost, both in instructional time and money, of all student assessments. And just this month, the *New York Times* ended a strongly worded editorial about the dangers of “testing mania” with a call for the country to “reconsider its obsession with testing, which can make education worse, not better.”

Gregory Cizek,

#### Everyone agrees there are diagnostic benefits to standardized testing

Richard Phelps, Third Education Group, 2005, ). Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

For the sake of both brevity and clarity, I divide the benefits of testing into three groups. First, there is the benefit of information used for diagnosis (e.g., of a student's or teacher's problems or progress). Standardized tests may reveal weaknesses or strengths that corroborate or supplement a teacher's or principal's analysis. Information for diagnosis, however, may be obtained from no-stakes standardized tests. For that, and other reasons, virtually no one disputes this benefit, and so it is not a part of the literature review here. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1673-1677). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Even Ravitch concedes testing has a role

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Children in the early elementary grades need teachers who set age-appropriate goals. They should learn to read, write, calculate, and explore nature, and they should have plenty of time to sing and dance and draw and play and giggle. Classes in these grades should be small enough— ideally fewer than twenty— so that students get the individual attention they need. Testing in the early grades should be used sparingly, not to rank students, but diagnostically, to help determine what they know and what they still need to learn. Test scores should remain a private matter between parents and teachers, not shared with the district or the state for any individual student. The district or state may aggregate scores for entire schools but should not judge teachers or schools on the basis of these scores.

#### Ravitch supports diagnostic standardized testing

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

More testing does not make children smarter. More testing does not reduce achievement gaps. More testing does nothing to address poverty and racial isolation, which are the root causes of low academic achievement. More testing will, however, undermine the creative spirit, the innovative spirit, the entrepreneurial spirit that have made our economy and our society successful. Used wisely, to identify student learning problems, testing can be useful to teachers. But testing should be used diagnostically, not to hand out rewards or punishments. Surely, there is value in structured, disciplined learning, whether in history, literature, mathematics, or science; students need to learn to study and to think; they need the skills and knowledge that are patiently acquired over time. Just as surely, there is value in the activities and projects that encourage innovation. The incessant demand for more testing and standardization advances neither. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1538-1543). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Data necessary to make improvements for minority children

Kevin Huffman is a fellow with New America and served as commissioner of education in Tennessee from 2011 to 2015, October 30, 2015, Washington Post, We Don’t Test Students as Much as People Think We Do, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-test-students-as-much-as-people-think-we-do-and-the-stakes-arent-really-that-high/2015/10/30/3d66de1c-7e79-11e5-beba-927fd8634498_story.html> DOA: 10-31-15

Administration officials understand that it would be completely irresponsible to ditch standardized testing. There is a reason that most civil rights groups [support annual exams](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/04/14/why-civil-rights-groups-support-standardized-tests/): They believe that [only through measurement and reporting](http://www.civilrights.org/press/2015/anti-testing-efforts.html) can we ensure that minority children make enough progress to pursue their dreams. It’s not unreasonable to take 2 percent of the school year and use it to measure the progress made during the other 98 percent.

#### Standardized tests serve many important purposes, they just must be limited, appropriate, and high quality

US Department of Education, October 24, 2015, Fact Sheet: Testing Action Plan, <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan> DOA: 10-31-15

One essential part of educating students successfully is assessing their progress in learning to high standards. Done well and thoughtfully, assessments are tools for learning and promoting equity. They provide necessary information for educators, families, the public, and students themselves to measure progress and improve outcomes for all learners. Done poorly, in excess, or without clear purpose, they take valuable time away from teaching and learning, draining creative approaches from our classrooms.  In the vital effort to ensure that all students in America are achieving at high levels, it is essential to ensure that tests are fair, are of high quality, take up the minimum necessary time, and reflect the expectation that students will be prepared for success in college and careers.

In too many schools, there is unnecessary testing and not enough clarity of purpose applied to the task of assessing students, consuming too much instructional time and creating undue stress for educators and students. The Administration bears some of the responsibility for this, and we are committed to being part of the solution.

No one set out to create situations where students spend too much time taking standardized tests or where tests are redundant or fail to provide useful information. Nevertheless, these problems are occurring in many places—unintended effects of policies that have aimed to provide more useful information to educators, families, students, and policymakers and to ensure attention to the learning progress of low-income and minority students, English learners, students with disabilities, and members of other groups that have been traditionally underserved. These aims are right, but support in implementing them well has been inadequate, including from this Administration. We have focused on encouraging states to take on these challenges and to provide them with flexibility. One of the results of this approach is that we have not provided clear enough assistance for how to thoughtfully approach testing and assessment.

What follows is a set of principles and steps to correct the balance, protecting the vital role that good assessment plays in guiding progress for students and evaluating schools and educators, while providing help in unwinding practices that have burdened classroom time or not served students or educators well. In addition, a [report from the Council of the Great City Schools](http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf) released today will help deepen the nation’s understanding of these issues.

**Principles for Fewer and Smarter Assessments**

Assessments must be:

1. **Worth Taking:** Testing should be a part of good instruction, not a departure from it. A good assessment is aligned to the content and skills a student is learning, and it requires the same kind of complex work students do in an effective classroom – or in the real world. Assessments should present useful information and questions that push students’ critical thinking skills, so that students gain valuable experience even while taking them. And assessments should provide timely, actionable feedback to students, parents, and educators that can be used to guide instruction and additional supports for students. They should also aid leaders’ decisions to target resources and supports. Assessment should happen only when necessary to accomplish those goals. No standardized test should ever be given solely for educator evaluation.
2. **High Quality:** High-quality assessment results in actionable, objective information about student knowledge and skills. Assessment systems should measure student knowledge and skills against state-developed college- and career-ready standards in a way that, as appropriate:
   * **Covers the full range of the relevant state standards** to ensure a full picture of what students know and can do;
   * **Elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge** and skills so that teachers and parents know that students are prepared for the real world;
   * **Provides an accurate measure of student achievement** for all students, including for high- and low-achieving students, so that all educators have the information they need to provide differentiated supports to students; and
   * **Provides an accurate measure of student growth** over time to recognize the progress that schools and educators are making to help students succeed.
3. **Time-limited:** While it is up to states and districts how to balance instructional time and the need for high-quality assessments, we recommend that states place a cap on the percentage of instructional time students spend taking required statewide standardized assessments to ensure that no child spends more than 2 percent of her classroom time taking these tests. Parents should receive formal notification if their child’s school exceeds this cap and an action plan should be publicly posted to describe the steps the state will take to review and eliminate unnecessary assessments, and come into compliance. States and school districts should carefully consider whether each assessment serves a unique, essential role in ensuring that students are learning.   
     
   Moreover, low-quality test preparation strategies must be eliminated.  States, districts, and educators should eliminate “drill-and-kill” test prep that is a poor use of students’ and educators’ classroom time.  Students do best on high-quality assessments that actually measure critical thinking and complex skills when they have been exposed to strong instruction, which should be the focus.  Districts should take concrete steps to discourage and limit the amount of test preparation activities.
4. **Fair – and Supportive of Fairness – in Equity in Educational Opportunity:** Assessments should be fair, including providing fair measures of student learning for students with disabilities and English learners. Accessibility features and accommodations must level the playing field so tests accurately reflect what students really know and can do. The same assessments of subjects like reading, writing, science, and math should be given consistently statewide, so that teachers and leaders have a clear picture of which students are meeting expectations and which students need additional supports and interventions to succeed. Likewise, policymakers and educators need to know which schools are seeing success with all groups of students, and which schools are struggling and in need of different and greater supports. States and districts should also ensure that assessments are only used for the purposes for which they were intended and designed. Annual statewide tests are an essential part of guiding that support.
5. **Fully Transparent to Students and Parents:** States and districts should ensure that every parent gets understandable information about the assessments their students are taking, by providing information to parents on any tests students are required to take, including (1) the purpose, (2) the source of the requirement, (3) when the information about student performance is provided to parents and teachers, (4) how teachers, principals, and district officials use the information about student performance, and (5) how parents can use that information to help their child.  Parents, educators and, as appropriate, students should also get the results of assessments in a timely and understandable manner, to have a shared understanding of how students are doing, and how educators and parents can help them succeed.
6. **Just One of Multiple Measures:** Assessments provide critical information about student learning, but no single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school. Information from sources such as school assignments, portfolios, and projects can help measure a student’s academic performance. In addition, factors including chronic absenteeism, student surveys, and indicators of discipline and school climate can help create a comprehensive understanding of students’ needs and how schools are doing. For educators, observations of practice, student surveys, and contributions to the school community can provide highly valuable information to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of performance, and to help educators strengthen their skills for the benefit of their students.
7. **Tied to Improved Learning:** While some tests are for accountability purposes only, the vast majority of assessments should be tools in a broader strategy to improve teaching and learning.  In a well-designed testing strategy, assessment outcomes are not only used to identify what students know, but also inform and guide additional teaching, supports, or interventions that will help students master challenging material.

#### Testing should be capped at 2% of instructional time

Edward Graham, a student at American University in Washington, D.C., is an intern with The Durango Herald, October 31, 2015, Durango Herald, Bennet Supports Limits on Standardized Tests, <http://www.durangoherald.com/article/20151031/NEWS01/151029672/Bennet-supports-limits-on-standardized-tests-> DOA: 10-31-15

“Learning is about so much more than just filling in the right bubble,” Obama said. “So we’re going to work with states, school districts, teachers and parents to make sure that we’re not obsessing about testing.”

The video coincided with the release of a Testing Action Plan from the Department of Education which criticized the number of unnecessary tests and asked for states to require a 2 percent cap on classroom time devoted to assessments. The Obama Administration also acknowledged its role in helping to increase the number of standardized tests.

“In too many schools, there is unnecessary testing and not enough clarity of purpose applied to the task of assessing students, consuming too much instructional time and creating undue stress for educators and students,” a portion of the plan said. “The Administration bears some of the responsibility for this, and we are committed to being part of the solution.”

### Generally Valuable

#### Standardized tests provide valuable information, promote transparency, let parents understand the academic progress of their children

Denver Post Editorial Board, October 31, 2015, Denver Post, “Obama’s Clumsy Take on School Testing, “http://www.denverpost.com/editorials/ci\_29047065/obamas-clumsy-take-school-testing DOA: 11-1-15

Now, after nearly everyone — from school districts to federal and state lawmakers, as well as teachers and parents — had concluded that the emphasis on testing sometimes went too far, the president has declared it true, too. In being so late to the discussion, unfortunately, Obama risks providing aid and comfort to those who refuse to acknowledge that standardized tests do in fact have an important role in education. In a nutshell, they strengthen accountability and transparency. They allow parents to learn how their children's achievement compares with others in the school, community — and, indeed, state and country. They highlight achievement gaps between ethnic groups and reveal whether they're getting larger or smaller over time. We must not return to an era when the public was kept in the dark about such matters. Obama's Education Department highlighted the importance of testing for a reason.

### No Alternative to Testing

#### No way to demonstrate learning absent the test

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

Some critics of high-stakes testing have suggested that these assessments may increase students' test scores, but not students' learning. However, that argument has not been made clearly. More importantly, a clear method for or logic regarding how to measure increases in learning in ways that would not show up in test score gains has not been put forward. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1351-1354). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### Con Evidence is Biased

#### Academic literature biased against testing

Richard Phelps, Third Education Group, 2005, ). Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

Third, many, if not most, studies finding testing benefits are simply not to be found stored in the more common research literature data bases. Research data bases tend to be biased toward the work of academic researchers, and academic researchers may be biased against testing. Researchers with a predisposition against testing are more likely to work in academe, where they are not required to perpetuate a practice of which they disapprove. Researchers with more favorable dispositions toward testing are more likely to work in the field, for testing companies or state education agencies, for example. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1745-1747). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### Common Core Tests Good

#### Common Core tests require schools to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

States should implement the new Common Core-aligned assessments.

Featuring open-response test items and problems that will encourage and test

higher-order thinking skills, the Common Core tests are expected to be of

higher quality than current state assessments. They therefore may offer states

and districts the opportunity to reduce the need to layer on additional tests to

compensate for poor-quality state assessments. States and districts are also more

likely to experience a faster turnaround in receiving test results than is currently

the case—something that appeared to drive a few of the districts explored in

this report to rely on district-wide tests.

Finally, the Common Core tests have the added benefit of being shared across

multiple states. As a result, they can support greater transparency of student

achievement across states.

### Valuable to Develop Test Taking Skills

#### Developing test taking skills supports minority students

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Many teachers view teaching of test-taking skills as a tawdry practice. They may avoid it or undertake instruction geared to preparing students to demonstrate their knowledge in a particular format—multiple choice, essay, and performance assessment—in a shamefaced or clandestine fashion. This unfortunate situation, largely engendered by critics of standardized testing, impedes student performance and harms teacher morale. Yet, more than 20 years ago, McPhail (1981) offered two worthy reasons for teaching test-taking skills: (a) "to improve the validity of test results" (p. 33) and (b) "to provide equal educational, employment, and promotional opportunity" (p. 34) particularly for disadvantaged students who often do not have access to additional educational resources enjoyed by their middle-class cohorts. This rationale remains compelling today. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 4368-4372). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Developing test taking skills is important to be licensed in many professions

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

In the highly mobile twenty-first century, students migrate with their parents across state and national borders, attend colleges thousands of miles from home, and apply for employment and graduate or professional studies in areas where their transcripts and other credentials cannot be measured on a common metric by those making the selection decisions. Standardized tests have become critical tools for decisions regarding college admission, college credits for high school work, graduate or school professional admission, and licensure for many blue-collar and white-collar professions. Put simply, no one becomes a physician, lawyer, teacher, nurse, accountant, electrician, fire-fighter, cosmetologist, or real estate broker without taking a series of tests. Caring, effective teachers should want to prepare their students for these future testing situations. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Location 4378). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Test taking skills have applications in real world contexts

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Furthermore the test-taking skills required by the short-essay or performance assessments, which now accompany the objective-item formats of many standardized assessments, have additional application to many real-world contexts in which individuals encounter demands for spontaneous written communications. Consider, for example, the following requests: "Explain why you have come to the clinic today and describe your symptoms;" "Describe how the accident occurred, and use diagrams, if necessary;" or "Describe your qualifications for the position." The ability to respond to a set of structured questions in a specific format has become a communications skill that is as vital in the repertoire of today's student as rhetoric was to the student of the nineteenth century. It is certainly as appropriate for teachers to impart these skills to students as it is for them to instruct them in other forms of oral and written communication. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 4383-4385). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### Improvements in Education

#### Quality test data is needed to improve schools

[Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/whitehurstg), [Martin R. West](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/westm), [Matthew M. Chingos](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/chingosm) and [Mark Dynarski](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/dynarskim), January 8, 2015, The Case for Annual Testing, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/01/08-chalkboard-annual-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

The provision of valid and actionable information on school performance is a uniquely federal responsibility

Information on school performance in education is a public good, meaning that individuals cannot be effectively excluded from using the information once it exists. Because it is impossible to prevent consumers who have not paid for the information from consuming it, far too little evidence will be produced if it is not required by the federal government.  Further, only local authorities can collect information on school performance from test scores and other local data, but their narrow self-interests are not usually served by making that information easily accessible and useable by the public.  Only federal requirements will achieve that end.   Finally, evidence on school performance does not merely need to be produced; it needs to be of high quality.  But gathering and auditing data are almost pure public services. That is why even when information on school or company performance is treated as a private good to support more informed consumer choice (e.g., college search sites that require a fee for access, or stock market services that sell advice on individual stocks), the information that customers pay to access is derived overwhelmingly from federal sources. In short, federal support for gathering and disseminating information on school performance is easy to justify.  If the federal government doesn’t support it, it will not happen.

#### Test scores needed to assess learning and improve education

[Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/whitehurstg), [Martin R. West](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/westm), [Matthew M. Chingos](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/chingosm) and [Mark Dynarski](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/dynarskim), January 8, 2015, The Case for Annual Testing, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/01/08-chalkboard-annual-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Student learning impacts long-term outcomes that everyone should value, and test scores are valid indicators of such learning

Scores that students receive on standardized tests administered in schools are strongly predictive of later life outcomes that are of great value to those students and the nation, after controlling for all the other observable characteristics of those students that are associated with later success.  What’s more, gains in test scores that result from interventions such as being assigned to a particularly effective teacher or attending a school facing accountability pressure also predict improvements in adult outcomes.  In other words, how much students learn in school makes a big difference in their lives, and standardized tests capture valid information on this.  As such, information on school performance that does not include information on student learning as measured by standardized tests will be badly compromised, like information on the performance of a publicly traded stock that does not include its historical returns.

Recent [work](http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.pdf) by economists Raj Chetty, John Friedman, and Jonah Rockoff on teacher effectiveness utilizes data from test score data in reading and math in grades 3-8 in New York City linked to IRS records for the same students as they became adults.  Our focus here is on these linked records and what they tell us about the predictive power of test scores, rather than on the story they tell about teacher effectiveness that was the focus of the Chetty et al. study.  The school records of the study sample provide test scores as well as a rich set of control variables, including student variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, special education status, record of suspensions, and limited English proficiency) and school variables (e.g., class size, teacher experience).  The tax records include individual earnings, information on college attendance, and child dependents (from which mothers who were teenagers when they gave birth could be identified).

Without controlling for other student characteristics and school variables the association between student test scores in grades 3-8 and later outcomes is huge, but it could reflect, for example, the impact of ethnicity or limited English proficiency independent of student learning.  With all controls in place the most important of these omitted variables are accounted for.  The association is still very large and most plausibly a function of the academic knowledge that is being assessed on the standardized tests.

The figure below (generated by the authors of this piece from information in Appendix Table 3 of Chetty et al.) represents the relationship between earnings at age 28 for students from the 5th to the 95th percentile in test scores in reading and math in grades 3-8, after adjusting earnings for the influence of all the control variables mentioned above.

To compare two points on the graph: relative to individuals who as students were at the 30th percentile, individuals who were at 70th percentile in test scores in elementary and middle school were earning 13.6% more as young adults.  To repeat, the association is net of the other variables that entered into the prediction as controls.  Some of these controls, such as special education status, capture the impact of student knowledge as measured on standardized tests, and thus bias downward the association that is represented in Figure 1.  Nevertheless, the estimated impact on earnings is very large.

Similarly large impacts are found on college attendance, the quality of college attended, the quality of the neighborhood of residence, and giving birth as a teenager among females.  Some of these relationships surely reflect the impact of students’ innate ability on their adult outcomes, but many studies have found that interventions that impact test scores also have impacts on later-life outcomes, including [class-size](http://www-personal.umich.edu/%7Ejmhyman/star.pdf) reduction, [school accountability](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/ddeming/files/w19444.pdf), [charter schools](http://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/wdobbie/files/dobbie_fryer_hcz.pdf), and exposure to [highly effective teachers](http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.pdf). Given these strong predictive and causal relationships, who among us that wants to improve education would choose to ignore how much students are learning in school as measured by standardized tests?  Unless the federal government mandates the collection and dissemination of this information, we will be bereft of one of the best indicators we currently have of school performance.

#### Need to measure student growth to improve schools

[Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/whitehurstg), [Martin R. West](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/westm), [Matthew M. Chingos](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/chingosm) and [Mark Dynarski](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/dynarskim), January 8, 2015, The Case for Annual Testing, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/01/08-chalkboard-annual-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Test scores matter for any form of accountability, including market-based accountability in which parents choose the schools their children attend and funding follows students to their school of choice.  Proponents of charter schools and open-enrollment in public schools will find that the informational fuel of their favored version of school reform will evaporate without valid information on annual student gains.

The removal of the requirement of annual testing will, necessarily, all but eliminate school-based accountability for the learning of subgroups of children because, as Whitehurst and Lindquist have [shown](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/22-more-testing-whitehurst), testing only samples of children or only one grade of children often leads to sample sizes for subgroups such as English learners and blacks that are too small to generate reliable estimates for the school as a whole.  Thus, those concerned with equity should strongly support annual testing in multiple grades.

Unless individual students are tested in adjacent grades as they move through school, which requires annual testing, it is impossible to measure gains in student achievement from one year to the next.  This has three consequences.

First, schools that serve a disproportionate share of disadvantaged children won’t be credited for their success in improving the academic abilities of their students because improvement won’t be visible, only status.  Thus, if children are only tested in 6th grade, the elementary school that moves its students from the 10th percentile in math to the 40th percentile from 3rd to 6th grade will look exactly the same as the school whose students performed at the 50th percentile in grade three and fell to the 40th percentile in grade six.

For the same reasons, it will be impossible to differentiate teachers based on their ability to generate gains in student learning in their classrooms.  Such value-added measures require a test-based estimate of the difference between how much math or language skills individual students have when entering vs. graduating from a teacher’s classroom.  This requires annual testing.  We have learned over the last decade just how important differences in teacher effectiveness are to student outcomes.  The ability to collect and use this information to support improvements in teacher preparation, professional development, and personnel actions will be lost without annual testing.

Finally, eliminating annual testing would prevent researchers and policymakers from judging the effectiveness of new education programs in which the research design depends on knowledge of students' recent achievement. By hampering our ability to learn about what’s working and what’s not, jettisoning annual testing would have a negative effect on the rate of improvement in achievement over time.

#### Standardized tests help identify strengths and weaknesses of both teachers and students

Debbie Thompson, 2009, Why Standardized Testing is Important in the Homeschool Environment, <http://www.triangleeducationassessments.com/standardizedtesting.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

First, standardized achievement tests can improve

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diagnosis of students’ and teachers’ strengths and

weaknesses. One test should not suffice for the total end

of grade assessment but hopefully, test results will

corroborate what you see on a daily basis. Results can

help guide us in knowing how a student compares to the

average national student. If a child’s scores seem to

indicate that they are falling behind academically, we can

get help instead of allowing the problem to persist.

Likewise, a student that is performing above and beyond

their grade level might be given an extra challenge, be

placed into a gifted program, or be granted opportunities

to pursue extra interests. Analyzing test results can help

an educator evaluate the effectiveness of a curriculum or

to help assess if instructional methods are a good match

to a child’s learning style. Clues to achievement

strengths and weaknesses as well as instructional

strengths or weaknesses can be ascertained from

analyzing achievement test results.

#### Schools use the information to improve

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

If standardized tests are misused, of course, the program and student learning may be defective. When standardized tests are used appropriately, a great deal can be learned about how well schools function. That information allows educators and policymakers to make better-informed conclusions about how much students are learning, which in turn allows them to make better-informed decisions about improving programs.

Students benefit directly when they take tests that offer information on how well they have mastered the material intended for learning. School reading and mathematics skills, for example, can be precisely specified, and as students learn the skills, they benefit from ongoing information tailored to their specific, individual progress. Computers streamline this process by providing immediate feedback about correct and incorrect responses far more quickly and with much greater patience than teachers and tutors can provide.

#### Tests needed to get data needed to improve education

Tamara Hiller & Stephanie Johnson, May 5, 2015, Third Way, John Oliver is Wrong About Standardized Testing,, <http://www.thirdway.org/third-way-take/john-oliver-is-wrong-on-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Second, while there may be legitimate questions surrounding who should be responsible for designing tests, Oliver glaringly omits the reality that tests can and do serve an important purpose in providing teachers and parents with critical data about student performance. In fact, the reason annual standardized testing emerged during the NCLB-era was because there were legitimate concerns that many students—often those historically marginalized—were not receiving actual instruction, and expectations for their performance were being set shockingly low. Without annual testing, there was no way to find out how students were doing until it was too late. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tests that existed prior to NCLB only tested a small sample of students in various subjects in different years, meaning there was no systematic way to check whether or not a child was on grade level in reading or math. So, unlike what Oliver would have you believe, the actual purpose of testing is to make sure that specific kids, or groups of kids, are not allowed to slip through the cracks year after year.

### Academic Achievement

#### Students in schools with standardized tests achieve more

Debbie Thompson, 2009, Why Standardized Testing is Important in the Homeschool Environment, <http://www.triangleeducationassessments.com/standardizedtesting.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Thirdly, the most controversial and least known benefit of

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standardized testing is that these tests can actually

improve achievement. Richard P. Phelps has found an

abundance of evidence demonstrating that students in

schools with testing programs learn more than their

counterparts in schools without testing mandates. An

objective instrument and/or an outside source of

assessment that is independent from teachers’

observations helps give a positive influence on teaching

methods and children’s achievements. Teachers work

harder to teach and students work harder to improve

their scores or to show their accomplishments when they

know they are being assessed.

#### Tests motivate students to perform better

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

The chief problem with U.S. schools apparently isn’t high dropout rates or underqualified teachers but standardized testing. This is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the push by parents and teachers in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Seattle and elsewhere to help students opt out of taking standardized tests.

Members of this burgeoning anti-test movement fail to grasp testing’s valuable role in motivating and guiding students and teachers. Preparing young Americans for success in the global economy will require our schools to improve, not abolish, academic standards.

#### Repeated testing improve retention

Jessica Lahey, January 21, 2014, The Atlantic, “Students Should Be Tested More, Not less,” <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/students-should-be-tested-more-not-less/283195/> DOA: 11-4-15

One researcher believes we are throwing a very effective learning tool out with our educational bathwater, and asserts that we should be testing students more, not less.

Henry L. Roediger III, a cognitive psychologist at Washington University, studies how the brain stores, and later retrieves, memories. He compared the test results of students who used common study methods—such as re-reading material, highlighting, reviewing and writing notes, outlining material and attending study groups—with the results from students who were repeatedly tested on the same material. When he compared the results, Roediger [found](http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic951136.files/powerOfTestingMemory-roedigerKarpicke.pdf), “Taking a test on material can have a greater positive effect on future retention of that material than spending an equivalent amount of time restudying the material.” Remarkably, this remains true “even when performance on the test is far from perfect and no feedback is given on missed information.”

### Minority and Disadvantaged Students

#### Testing and reporting critical to ensure minority students receive adequate educations

Sophie Quinton, January 23, 2015, National Journal, Is Standardized Testing a Civil Rights Issue?, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/education/Is-Standardized-Testing-Civil-Rights-Issue> DOA: 10-26-15

Nine­teen [groups](http://www.edtrust.org/dc/press-room/news/more-than-20-civil-rights-groups-and-education-advocates-release-principles-for-e), in­clud­ing the NAACP and the Chil­dren’s De­fense Fund, re­cently re­leased a state­ment back­ing the law’s core test­ing re­quire­ment. “ES­EA must con­tin­ue to re­quire high-qual­ity, an­nu­al statewide as­sess­ments for stu­dents in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school,” Wade Hende­r­son, head of the Lead­er­ship Con­fer­ence on Civil and Hu­man Rights, said at a Sen­ate hear­ing on Wed­nes­day.

Tests should track stu­dents’ pro­gress to­ward state stand­ards, said Hende­r­son, and those stand­ards have to align with what stu­dents need to know to suc­ceed in col­lege or in the work­force. Without data to show that stu­dents are on track, it could be all too easy for dis­ad­vant­aged chil­dren to re­ceive a sub­stand­ard edu­ca­tion.

### Gifted Enrollment

#### Standardized testing important to determine prediction and selection for gifted programs

Debbie Thompson, 2009, Why Standardized Testing is Important in the Homeschool Environment, <http://www.triangleeducationassessments.com/standardizedtesting.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Secondly, standardized tests can improve prediction and

selection for gifted programs, college, scholarships, or

employment. Results can be highly effective in

identifying needs of exceptional students. Standardized

test scores are an additional source of information to

assess academic performance and a student’s

coursework, day-to-day test scores, homework,

portfolios, and projects are other means of assessment.

Achievement and ability tests can help describe a

student’s learning abilities, academic accomplishments

and give reliable predication for college success

### Communicating Assessment of Academic Skills

#### Standardized testing is needed to communicate an honest assessment of academic skills to parents

Lelac Almagor, September 2, 2014, Boston Review, The Good in Standardized Testing, <http://bostonreview.net/us/lelac-almagor-finding-good-in-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

I was still in college the first time someone cried in a parent-teacher conference with me. I had found a summer job at a free enrichment program for public school students. One of our students had just taken her first-ever standardized test, a practice version of the entrance examination for an elite magnet high school. She had scored in something like the fourteenth percentile.

“I don’t understand,” her mother told me. “She does all her work in school. She does her homework. She does extra. I stay on top of her grades from the beginning. Always, she is getting As. Always, I think she is doing well.”

Even then, at the beginning of my teaching career, I could see how this had happened. A quiet, diligent, well-behaved girl who turned in all her assignments—of course her grades were great. But she couldn’t read grade-level texts. Neither could many of her classmates at their majority-minority, wrong-side-of-the-tracks public school.

Our summer program offered open enrollment and free enrichment; it tended to attract motivated students with motivated parents. The kids largely earned decent grades. Still, we took for granted that most would need remediation, extra support in basic skills they should have mastered long before middle school. Our strongest students would have qualified as just barely at grade level relative to national norms. What we called striving for excellence was really a pitched battle to break even.

Without standardized testing—and lacking any other basis for comparison in their own educational experience—the students’ families had no way of knowing what I had assumed was obvious: that eighth graders on the other side of town were well past working on multisyllabic words or improper fractions. They had no way of knowing that their hardworking, solid-GPA kids were already far behind.

Six months later, when President George W. Bush proposed the No Child Left Behind Act, which made standardized testing mandatory beginning in the third grade, I imagined this mom as the beneficiary. Someone should have told her years ago that her daughter wasn’t reading well. She should have known what her daughter’s teachers understood: that her daughter did well relative to her classmates but lagged behind the more privileged kids with whom she’d never go to school. She should have known that the gap would only widen over the years—that school wasn’t fixing the problem but allowing it to fester.

I don’t know what she would have done about it. But she had a right to know.

#### Standardized testing communicates an honest assessment of students’ skills

Lee Binz, The HomeScholar is a dynamic homeschool speaker and [author](http://www.thehomescholar.com/homeschoolbooks.php" \t "_blank). She is an expert on how to craft a winning [homeschool transcript](http://www.thehomescholar.com/totaltranscriptsolution.php" \t "_blank), 7 Surprising Benefits of Standardized Testing, <http://theendinmind.net/benefits-standardized-testing/> DOA: 10-25-15

One benefit of testing is to help you get a realistic perspective of your student’s academic abilities.  Scores of parents have complained to me about how poorly their child is doing in school, only to be completely surprised by their results on a standardized test.  One mother was flabbergasted to see that her child’s overall California Achievement Test score was 99%!  The score helped her relax and get a little perspective on her concerns.

We see our child’s failures up close and personal every single day. Testing also helps you assess your child’s relative strengths.  As parents, we are tempted to dwell on our children’s weaknesses and we lose sight of their strengths. Constantly focusing on weaknesses keeps us from affirming their strengths – strengths they might not even realize they have.

### A2: Kids Spend Too Much Time on Testing

#### Only 1% of student time is devoted to testing

Tamara Hiller & Stephanie Johnson, May 5, 2015, Third Way, John Oliver is Wrong About Standardized Testing,, <http://www.thirdway.org/third-way-take/john-oliver-is-wrong-on-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Oliver argued that there are too many standardized tests and that tests are so high pressure that students are literally throwing up on them. It’s important to put some of these claims into perspective. Oliver is right that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) increased the number of federal tests from six to 17. However, he failed to disclose that those 17 tests are spread out throughout a child’s entire K-12 career. In fact, according to recent studies, the average child in the U.S. spends [1.6% to 1.7% of instructional time](http://www.asbj.com/MainMenuCategory/Archive/2015/Time-on-Task.pdf" \t "_blank) in standardized testing each year—not exactly a significant amount of time, by any stretch of the imagination.

#### Most students only spend close to 1% of time on standardize tests, only a few are a bit over 2%

Kevin Huffman is a fellow with New America and served as commissioner of education in Tennessee from 2011 to 2015, October 30, 2015, Washington Post, We Don’t Test Students as Much as People Think We Do, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-test-students-as-much-as-people-think-we-do-and-the-stakes-arent-really-that-high/2015/10/30/3d66de1c-7e79-11e5-beba-927fd8634498_story.html> DOA: 10-31-15

Contrary to the exaggerations, though, most states already are under the 2 percent testing cap. A [Center for American Progress analysis](https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/) of 14 districts in seven states found that testing consumed an average of 1.6 percent of instructional time. In Tennessee, where I served as education commissioner, state-mandated standardized tests — covering reading, math, social studies and science — averaged between seven and 10 hours per student each year, well under 1 percent of the school year. Other states run longer, but only at the margins. The half-the-year claims? Creative math, at best.

### A2: Unfair Way to Assess Teachers

#### Very few districts assess teachers through standardized tests

Tamara Hiller & Stephanie Johnson, May 5, 2015, Third Way, John Oliver is Wrong About Standardized Testing,, <http://www.thirdway.org/third-way-take/john-oliver-is-wrong-on-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Only 3.5% of school districts across the U.S. even attempt to use a merit pay system, as the [National Center on Performance Incentives](http://educationnext.org/in-the-united-states-merit-pay-plans-for-teachers-are-few-and-far-between/" \t "_blank) found, so the idea that test scores and pay are linked is not true for the vast majority of teachers.

### A2: Doesn’t Benefit Specific Kids

#### Many specific student improvements

Tamara Hiller & Stephanie Johnson, May 5, 2015, Third Way, John Oliver is Wrong About Standardized Testing,, <http://www.thirdway.org/third-way-take/john-oliver-is-wrong-on-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Lastly, John Oliver uses international test scores to make the claim that standardized testing has had no benefit whatsoever for any student population since the passage of NCLB. The data say otherwise. Under NCLB, students writ large have made crucial gains in reading and math over the last decade, as [NAEP data](http://www.thirdway.org/memo/did-no-child-left-behind-work" \t "_blank) show. The country’s 9-year-olds gained on average 9 points in reading and 12 points in math, a significant improvement from the glacial gains seen in the decades prior. More importantly, however, the introduction of standardized testing—and the accountability that came along with it—helped students of color and high-needs populations fare significantly better than in the decades leading up to NCLB. For example, African American 9-year-olds made twice as much improvement in reading than their white counterparts, the gap between white and Hispanic 9-year-olds in math narrowed by 8 points, and more students with disabilities scored in the “proficient” or higher level in both math and reading than in decades leading up to NCLB. While we still have work to do on this score, particularly to close achievement gaps, it is completely inaccurate to say that no gains been made under NCLB.

#### Teachers can only help students improve when data is available

Cheryl Warner & Todd Wessels, April 24, 2015, Why standardized tests have value, <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2015/04/24/standardized-tests-value/26275317/> DOA: 10-25-15

As a first grade teacher at Holy Family Catholic Schools in Dubuque, Mrs. Rambousek did not immediately see the value of the standardized tests used in her classroom, where 56 percent of her students were falling below grade level in reading at the start of the school year. At the end of the semester, Mrs. Rambousek received her students' reading scores from the Iowa State Assessment; more than 50 percent remained below proficient. Determined to make improvements to her students' learning, she was disheartened to see so many still falling behind despite her hard work.

Fortunately, at the beginning of the same school year Holy Family added Measures of Academic Progress Assessment (MAP) into their comprehensive assessment system. When Mrs. Rambousek was able to overlay the results from her students' MAP scores — which tracks growth over time — with Iowa State Assessment results, a light bulb went off.

She saw that although many of her students were still reading below grade level on the state assessment, 92.3 percent of her kids' reading scores increased by 163 percent on the MAP test. The information revealed her students were indeed making progress. What's more, she understood the value she provided as an educator. Her students were reading at higher levels than ever before.

It's not just students below-grade level and their teachers who experience the benefits of a comprehensive assessment system; gifted students and their families also benefit.

The parents of one student at Dubuque Community Schools saw their son wrestle with his more advanced math courses as he transitioned into a new school. His parents were concerned he wasn't making progress, but by comparing his benchmark scores to his growth scores over time, his family was given an entirely new perspective of his achievement.

As many teachers, school leaders, students and parents will tell you, a comprehensive assessment system is critical for providing the information needed to improve classroom instruction and support learning.

#### Even if education hasn’t improved, we should still conduct tests

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

The first and most serious [error] is its underlying assumption, that state tests aren't working if student performance isn't improving. That's a bit like saying that we ought not measure commute times because, since we started monitoring freeway traffic, commutes haven't gotten any shorter and in some cases it is actually taking people longer to get to work. If anybody suggested such a thing in transportation policy, they would be laughed out of the room. Here the study commits one of the most common errors in statistical analysis. It concludes that because one thing happened before another thing, the first probably caused the second. But that is a very dangerous conclusion. (Weintraub, 2003) (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1054-1058). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Evidence that testing improves learning

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

Through the fog of negative assertions from education insiders, though, some astute observers have been able to see the effects of testing clearly. A recent article in the Virginian-Pilot reported on an evaluation of Virginia's rigorous accountability testing system [called the "Standards of Learning" (SOL)] over the period since the SOL program was instituted in 1998. The evaluation revealed that: • 4th- and 6th-grade Virginia students' scores on the norm-referenced Stanford Achievement Tests in reading, language, and mathematics had increased over the time frame studied (scores for ninth grade students remained stable); • statewide average SAT-Verbal and SAT-Mathematics scores rose; and • "more students have taken Advanced Placement tests and enrolled in rigorous International Baccalaureate programs since the SOL program began" (Study Shows, 2003, p. 1). Another recent example reports on increasing student achievement in Massachusetts. USA Today cites a review of that state's standards-based reforms by Achieve, "the state using the nation's highest regarded test is reaping some of the most impressive gains." The article concluded that "testing can improve student performance, especially when states serve up high-quality education standards backed by relevant, high-quality tests" (Schools sharpen testing, 2001, p. A-14). The news from Massachusetts is particularly enlightening, as that state has a relatively long track record with high-stakes testing. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is also one of the most transparent and scrutinized programs of its kind. Recent news reports indicate that students are learning more of what that state hopes for students to achieve as measured by its high school examinations. In 2002, 1 year after pass rates on the MCAS exam rose significantly—a gain that was viewed skeptically by opponents of that high-stakes testing program— • overall achievement increased again. In spring 2002, 86 percent of sophomores passed the MCAS English exam (up from 82% in 2001), whereas 75% passed the math exam (the same as in spring 2001) and 69% of sophomores passed both sections (Hayward, 2002a); • achievement gaps narrowed. On the 2002 tests, the percentage of African-American students passing the English section increased by 7% (although the pass rate for that group on the math exam slipped by 3 points). "The pass rate for Hispanics high-schoolers on the (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing English exam jumped from 52 percent to 61 percent" (Hayward, 2002a); and • dropout rates remained stable. According to the Boston Herald newspaper, "The state's high school dropout rate remained stable at 3.5% during the 2000–2001 school year, countering theories that the MCAS tests would lead to an exodus" (Hayward, 2002b). The 3.5% rate was the same as for the 1999–2000 school year, and 1% less than for the 1998–1999 school year. These rosy outcomes related to student learning and related concerns are corroborated by testimony from students themselves. For example, in a recent study (Mass Insight Education, 2002) interviews were conducted with 140 randomly selected urban high school students regarding their perceptions about the MCAS. The results revealed that: • 67% of students who failed the MCAS the first time they took it said that, as a result, they are working harder in school; 65% said that they pay more attention in class since failing the MCAS; • 74% of students interviewed said that missing too much school is a "big reason" why students don't pass MCAS; 64% said that not working hard enough in school and on homework is a big reason; • 74% reported that they consider themselves to be more able in math, reading or writing because they have to pass the MCAS in order to graduate; and • 53% said that they get more help and attention from teachers since getting their MCAS results. Taken together, these results are not dispositive, of course, with respect to questions about the consequences of high-stakes testing in general, or with respect to effects on student learning in particular. However, the results are reasonably positive—and markedly more positive than most opponents of high-stakes testing seem willing to admit. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1396-1397). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Presence of the test increases the motivation of students, teachers, and administrators

Richard Phelps, Third Education Group, 2005, ). Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

Third, there remain those benefits that accrue from the changes in behavior induced by the presence of a test, usually a standardized test with stakes. Those behavior changes typically include increases in motivation (on the part of students, teachers, administrators, or others), the incorporation of feedback information from tests, an associated narrowing of focus on the task at hand, and increases in organizational efficiency, clarity, or the alignment of standards, curriculum, and instruction.2 Most any parent or taxpayer likely would consider increases in any of these behaviors to be positive, to clearly be benefits. Many education researchers, however, consider them to be represent wishful thinking. Moreover, as one does not normally look for that which one does not wish to find, mainstream education research lacks anything other than fairly superficial literature reviews of the topic. Ergo, this effort here. There are, however, other, more respectable reasons for not knowing the research literature on standardized testing's achievement benefits. First among them, of course, is the simple fact that so many researchers have declared that the literature does not exist. Why would one spend time looking for something that does not exist? (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1708-1713). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Tests Measure Poorly

#### Tests are well designed and adequately measure students’ knowledge, skills, and understandings

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

Political leaders have also revealed a deep misunderstanding about the purpose and use of standardized testing when they claim tests are too simple or too biased to measure up to the subjective judgments of educators themselves. Such claims are naïve or deliberately misleading.

Research and experience show that standardized tests are generally good at measuring students’ knowledge, skills, and understandings because they are objective, fair, efficient, and comprehensive. For these reasons, they are used for decisions about admission to colleges, graduate programs, and professional schools as well as qualification and licensing for many skilled occupations and demanding professions such as law and medicine.

#### Standardized tests benefit students

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Educators can better help students when they know how a student’s objective performance compares with others, and standardized tests can provide such information at low costs and very little class time. Caroline Hoxby of Stanford University’s Department of Economics and the Hoover Institution has estimated that that the costs of tests are less than 0.1 percent of total spending on K-12 education and amount to an average of less than $6 per student.

Comparative studies by John Bishop of Cornell University found that countries requiring students to take nationally standardized tests showed higher scores on international tests than those in countries not requiring such tests.

In a second study, Bishop found that U.S. students who anticipated having to pass a standardized test for high school graduation learned more science and math, were more likely to complete homework and talk with their parents about schoolwork, and watched less television than peers who were not required to pass such exams.

#### Tests are properly designed

Tamara Hiller & Stephanie Johnson, May 5, 2015, Third Way, John Oliver is Wrong About Standardized Testing,, <http://www.thirdway.org/third-way-take/john-oliver-is-wrong-on-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Perhaps one of the biggest claims Oliver made is that the tests being given to students are so poorly designed that they are utterly useless. But what about the fact that most states have recently transitioned over to new tests that [look quite different](http://excelined.org/common-core-toolkit/old-standards-v-common-core-a-side-by-side-comparison-of-english-language-arts-2/" \t "_blank) from the fill-in-the-bubble assessments of years past? He completely disregards this. In fact, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) that he specifically references in the segment was actually phased out of use last year. Now, Florida students take the Florida Standards Assessments, which according to the state’s [Department of Education](http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/3/urlt/qa-03-17.pdf" \t "_blank) will “include more than multiple choice questions” and “assess students’ higher-order thinking skills.” A similar trend can be seen around the country, as [27 states](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2015/02/a_map_of_states_2015_testing_p.html" \t "_blank) are implementing new assessments aligned to college and career ready standards. And in many states, students will use computer-adaptive and competency-based assessments that test more than just rote memorization and rudimentary skills. Tests have come a long way, and they are getting better quickly—a fact John Oliver completely ignores.

### A2: Tests Don’t Measure What Students Need to Learn

#### Tests do measure what is important

Dean Goodman & Ronald Hambleton, University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

In the past decade, one of the most fundamental shifts in statewide assessments has been the concerted effort to develop assessments that are based on state content standards. Content standards outline what students should know and be able to do in a given subject area. These standards provide a common focus for both instruction and assessment (National Research Council, 1999), offering direction to teachers about what to teach students in the classroom, and to state testing programs about what to assess in statewide assessments. The most recent survey of state assessment programs by Education Week (2003a) reveals an increasing commitment by states to administer criterion-referenced assessments that are designed to measure student mastery of state content standards. Expanded uses of constructed response questions and writing tasks are two ways that states are taking to address their content standards. This is an important trend. In 2002, 42 states administered these types of assessments at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, up from 37 states in 2001 (Education Week, 2003a). In stark contrast, in 1995 only 19 states administered criterion-referenced assessments that were aligned with state standards (Education Week, 1997). With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), there is an even greater commitment to ensure that large-scale tests or assessments reflect the knowledge and skills expected to be learned by all students in a state. To comply with this federal law, states must adopt "challenging academic content standards and challenging student achievement standards" (NCLB, 2002, Sec. 1111[b][1][A]) and administer state or local assessments that are aligned with these standards (Sec. 1111[b][3][C]). States that cannot demonstrate they have satisfied these requirements will not be eligible for substantial federal funding. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 2745-2750). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Teachers Oppose

#### The purpose of tests is to benefit the students

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

Finally, some critics of testing complain that tests cause malaise among educators. But good schools focus on student learning, not on the satisfaction of the professional staff. If the data shows that testing benefits students, it should be pursued even if there isn’t unanimous teacher support.

Good student performance on tests should be a source of satisfaction among successful educators. The appropriate tests can reveal strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and instruction. Our nation’s poor achievement progress shows that substantial improvements in teaching and learning are needed—and progress on those two fronts can and should be measured by standardized tests.

### A2: Rote Learning/Spitting Back Information

#### Common Core tests require higher order thinking skills

Lelac Almagor, September 2, 2014, Boston Review, The Good in Standardized Testing, <http://bostonreview.net/us/lelac-almagor-finding-good-in-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Lately, when we talk about testing, we whisper with apocalyptic trepidation about the coming shift to the Common Core and new national assessments that align to it. These exams are less repetitive and grueling than the DC CAS, but so much harder. They require even young students to synthesize multiple sources, write analytical essays, perform a “research simulation,” and solve multi-part problems that feel more like logic puzzles.

It is less practical to “prep” kids for this kind of test. They have to actually be prepared—to be confident reading and writing at or above grade level—before they can begin to tackle the task itself. Compared with state tests such as the DC CAS, early versions of these Common Core–aligned tests have often revealed bigger gaps in achievement between disadvantaged kids and their peers. But the measurement is not the problem.

#### Standardized tests can be developed in a way that makes students think

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

Those who oppose standardized tests also argue that the tests can only measure simple facts students can memorize. But tests assessing advanced understanding and judgment do exist. They may, for instance, require respondents to select the best idea from a group of different and compelling positions. They may require respondents to identify the best reason for action, the best interpretation of a set of ideas, or the best application of important principles.

#### Standardized tests now ask high order, complex questions

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Solid research evidence is also available to refute some of the most commonly encountered criticisms of high-stakes tests (see, for example, Bishop, 1998, 2000). With changes in content standards and test construction practices, few state-mandated tests can be said to be "lower order" or consist solely of recall-type questions. In fact, recent experience in states such as Washington, Arizona, and Massachusetts signals that concerns about low-level tests are being replaced by a concern that complex content is being pushed too early in students' school years, that performance expectations may be too high, and that test content is sometimes too challenging (see, e.g., Bowman, 2000; Orlich, 2000; Shaw, 1999). (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Location 1046). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Bad to Punish a Student for One Test Score

#### A single test score is only part of the assessment

Dean Goodman & Ronald Hambleton, University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

Another misconception of state assessments is that states are placing too much emphasis on a single test score. In their condemnation of state assessments, critics are eager to detail the plight of students who cannot graduate or move on to the next grade based on the results of a single test. Critics rarely point out, testing program. But after that time, the best way to show achievement gain is for teachers to help students master the content standards because there are only so many points achievable (and hopefully few) from capitalizing on those test-taking skills that inflate scores due to shortcomings in the test construction process. The likely long-term payoff in achievement gain is much greater from teaching the content standards than making all students "test-wise."

Moreover, critics often fail to acknowledge that students are given multiple opportunities to pass these tests. In Massachusetts, for example, students have five opportunities to pass the state graduation test, and students who do not obtain passing scores by the end of their senior year may demonstrate the requisite skills and knowledge in other ways (e.g., in 2002, 7 of the 19 states with graduation contingent on performance on statewide exams also provided alternative routes for students who failed the exams; Education Week, 2003b). In Massachusetts, too, there is an appeals process for students who are close to the passing score on the mathematics and English language arts tests, have high attendance at school, and have taken the state graduation test at least twice. The appeals are accepted if the students' school grades in core subjects are comparable or better than the grades of students who were just above the passing score on the state test. This system appears to be working well. Surprisingly, the public does not seem to be aware of the appeals process because rarely is this feature mentioned in public discourse about the state graduation requirement. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 2793-2797). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Culltural and Racial Bias in Testing Subject Matter

#### Review eliminates cultural and racial bias

Dean Goodman & Ronald Hambleton, University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

Test publishers and state departments of education are relentless in their search for potentially biased test items by reviewing items for potential gender, racial/ethnic, cultural, religious, regional, or socioeconomic disparities in understanding or performance. Consider the steps taken routinely by many testing agencies and state departments of education to remove bias from educational assessments: 1. Item writers who are members of multicultural and multiracial groups are among those who are used to write the assessment material—directions, questions, scoring rubrics, etcetera.

2. Item sensitivity committees representing diverse minority groups are established to focus on aspects of educational assessment material that might be unfair to minority students, or may represent stereotyping of minority groups. 3. Item reviewers, prior to any field testing of assessment material, are instructed to identify aspects of test items that might be unfair to minority groups or represent stereotyping. 4. Statistical analyses are carried out on field-test data searching for assessment material that is potentially problematic for minority groups. 5. All test publishers and most state departments of education have a document that is used by item sensitivity committees and other reviewers to spot potentially problematic or biased assessment material. 6. At the final stages of test and assessment development, content committees are sensitive to the inclusion of material that is not assessing the content standards or may be biased against minority groups. .

Normally item writers and reviewers would be asked to avoid or identify a variety of potential sources of item bias that might distinguish majority and minority groups of students: content that may not have the same meaning across groups, test items that contain vocabulary that may not have the same meaning in all groups, clues in items that might give an unfair advantage to students in one group over another, items that because of student prior knowledge may advantage one group over another, and so on. Often, item writers are asked to avoid 25 to 30 potential sources of item bias in their work, and just in case they slip up, item reviewers are given the same list of potential sources of item bias to see if they can spot these problems or any others in items that have been written. In addition to judgmental reviews, it is common to compile statistical data (e.g., using logistic regression or the Mantel-Haenszel procedure) to compare students in majority and minority groups (at least for males and females, and Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites). For several years, the Center for Educational Assessment at the University of Massachusetts has been conducting studies to identify potentially biased test items on seven of the state's educational assessments. Black-White, Hispanic-White, and Male-Female analyses are routinely carried out. In the year 2000, for example, potential item bias was studied in 696 items and only 24 items were identified for additional investigation. This is a rate of 3.5% of the test items with a combined potential bias of a small fraction of a point (on a 40 point test) if all of the potentially biased test items were actually biased against a single (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 2946-2953). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

minority group. Items are flagged for further investigation if majority and minority groups matched on overall ability show a .10 or greater difference on a per point basis. (This means that there would need to be 10 of these potentially biased items in a test to result in an actual one point difference between the majority and minority group due to potentially biased test items.) Clearly the amount of bias that is appearing on educational assessments is likely to be small because of the efforts that are being made to spot and eliminate problems early. There is simply little or no evidence to claim that item bias is a serious problem today on state assessments. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 2953-2957). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Testing only demonstrates the gap, it is not responsible for it

Lelac Almagor, September 2, 2014, Boston Review, The Good in Standardized Testing, <http://bostonreview.net/us/lelac-almagor-finding-good-in-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Compared with state tests such as the DC CAS, early versions of these Common Core–aligned tests have often revealed bigger gaps in achievement between disadvantaged kids and their peers. But the measurement is not the problem.

Testing doesn’t produce the staggering gaps in performance between privileged and unprivileged students; historical, generational, systemic inequality does. Testing only seeks to tell the truth about those gaps, and the truth is that the complex tasks of the Common Core are a better representation of what our students need to and ought to be able to do. I’m all for measuring that as accurately as we can. In recent years our schools have in fact made huge gains in helping our students tackle real complexity. I’d love to take genuine pride in our scores, knowing they reflect those strides toward rigor.

### A2: Teaching to the Test

#### That’s the point – the kids need to learn what is on the test

Norman R. Augustine is chairman of the National Academies’ congressionally mandated review of U.S. competitiveness. He is a former chairman and chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp, Bangor Daily News, August 3, 2013, Bangor Daily News, Here’s Why Schools Need Standardized Testing, <http://bangordailynews.com/2013/08/03/education/heres-why-schools-need-standardized-testing/> DOA: 10-25-15

First, they contend that these exams detract from the larger goals of education by encouraging teachers to “teach the test.”

In a certain sense, however, teaching the test is the whole point. Exams are instruments for measuring student proficiency. And, as I’ve learned during my career in the business world, measuring something is often the best way to maximize or improve it. Economist Dan Ariely of Duke University has said: “CEOs care about stock value because that’s how we measure them. If we want to change what they care about, we should change what we measure.”

If an exam effectively gauges a student’s mastery of U.S. history or English grammar, then teaching the test is simply a matter of helping students develop that knowledge. Teachers who feel that a test ignores something essential should commit to fixing the test, not condemning the entire practice of testing.

#### Yes, the instruction should match the testing

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Another version involves narrowing teaching to include only those objectives covered by the high-stakes test. Many testing professionals (and others) would also agree that exclusion of other, valuable outcomes and experiences from the curriculum is undesirable. Finally, it is possible to align instruction with the curriculum guide, content standards, and so forth (depending on the terminology used to describe the valuable student outcomes in a particular locale). And, it is obviously desirable that any high-stakes test be closely aligned with the curriculum or content standards it purports to assess. Thus, it would neither be a coincidence—nor inappropriate—if the well-aligned instruction and testing bore a strong resemblance to each other. This is sometimes mistakenly referred to as teaching to the test where the more accurate (and supportable) practice should probably be distinguished by use of a different descriptor, such as teaching to the standards or similar. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1328-1336). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Test design prevents over-teaching to the test

Dean Goodman & Ronald Hambleton, University of Massachusetts @ Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

To address concerns about "teaching to the test," state assessment programs typically administer different forms of a test within and across each testing cycle. These forms often share a sufficient number of items to ensure that the forms can be placed on a common scoring metric through a statistical equating process (see Cook & Eignor, 1991; Kolen, 1988; and Kolen & Brennan, 1995; for discussions of ways different test forms can be equated). The test forms also contain unique sets of items that enable reliable information to be collected on a wide range of skills and concepts taught throughout the course of study. Ironically, when curriculum and assessment are in alignment, "teaching to the test" is exactly what teachers should be doing because the test or assessment will contain a sampling of questions from the curriculum, and so the only way to effectively prepare students to perform well on the tests is to teach the curriculum to which the tests are matched. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 2772-2775). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Special Needs Students

#### High stakes testing accommodates students with special needs and has brought attention to these students

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

2. Accommodation. Recent federal legislation enacted to guide the implementation of high-stakes testing has been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs. Describing the impact of legislation such as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), Thurlow and Ysseldyke (2001) observed that, "both Goals 2000 and the more forceful IASA indicated that high standards were to apply to all students. In very clear language, these laws defined 'all students' as including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency" (p. 389). The No Child Left Behind Act reinforces the notion that the era of exceptions for exceptional students has ended. Rather, to the greatest extent possible, all pupils will be tested to obtain information about their progress relative to a state's content standards in place for all students. In accordance with these mandates, states across the United States are scurrying to adapt those tests for all students, report disaggregated results for subgroups, and implement accommodations so that tests and accountability reporting more accurately reflect the learning of all students. The result has been a very positive diffusion of awareness. Increasingly at the classroom level, educators are becoming more sensitive to the needs and barriers special needs students face when they take tests—even ordinary classroom assessments. If not driven within the context of once-per-year, high-stakes tests, it is doubtful that such progress would have been witnessed in the daily experiences of many special needs learners. Much research in the area of high-stakes testing and students at risk has provided evidence of this positive consequence of mandated testing. One recent example comes from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which has monitored effects of that large, urban school district's high stakes testing and accountability program. There researchers found that students (particularly those who had some history of failure) reported that the introduction of accountability testing had induced their teachers to begin focusing more attention on them (Roderick & Engel, 2001). Failure was no longer acceptable and there was a stake in helping all students succeed. In this case, necessity was the mother of intervention. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1225-1226). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Teachers Lack Knowledge of Testing

#### Teachers have developed knowledge of testing

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

3. Knowledge about testing. For years, testing specialists have documented a lack of knowledge about assessment on the part of many educators. The title of one such article bluntly asserted educators' "Apathy toward Testing and Grading" (Hills, 1991). Other research has chronicled the chronic lack of training in assessment for teachers and principals and has offered plans for remediation (see, e.g., Impara & Plake, 1996; Stiggins, 1999). Unfortunately, for the most part, it has been difficult to require assessment training for preservice teachers or administrators, and even more difficult to wedge such training into graduate programs in education. Then along came high-stakes tests. What faculty committees could not enact has been accomplished circuitously. Granted, misperceptions about tests persist (e.g., in my home state of North Carolina there is a lingering myth that "the green test form is harder than the red one"), but I am discovering that, across the country, educators know more about testing than ever before. Because many tests now have stakes associated with them, it has become de rigeur for educators to inform themselves about their content, construction, and consequences. Increasingly, teachers can tell you the difference between a norm-referenced and a criterion-referenced test; they can recognize, use, or develop a high-quality rubric; they can tell you how their state's writing test is scored, and so on. Along with this knowledge has come the secondary benefit that knowledge of sound testing practices has had positive consequences at the classroom level—a trickle-down effect. For example, one recent study (Goldberg & Roswell, 1999/2000) investigated the effects on teachers who had participated in training and scoring of tasks for the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). Those teachers who were involved with the MSPAP overwhelmingly reported that their experience had made them more reflective, deliberate, and critical in terms of their own classroom instruction and assessment. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1234-1242). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Data Quality Inadequate

#### Dramatic improvement in data quality

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

4 & 5. Collection and use of information. Because pupil performance on high-stakes tests has become of such prominent and public interest, an intensity of effort unparalleled in U.S. education history is now directed toward data collection and quality control. State and federal mandates for the collection and reporting of this information (and more), have also resulted in unparalleled access to the data. Obtaining information about test performance, graduation rates, per-pupil spending, staffing, finance, and facilities is, in most states, now just a mouse-click away. How would you like your data for secondary analysis: Aggregated or disaggregated? Single year or longitudinal? PDF or Excel? Paper or plastic? Consequently, those who must respond to state mandates for data collection (i.e., school districts) have become increasingly conscientious about providing the most accurate information possible—often at risk of penalties for inaccuracy or incompleteness. This is an unqualified boon. Not only is more information about student performance available, but it is increasingly used as part of decision making. At a recent teacher recruiting event, I heard a recruiter question a teacher about how she would be able to tell that her students were learning. "I can just see it in their eyes," was the reply. "Sorry, you are the weakest link." Increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are making use of student performance data to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success. If the data—in particular achievement test data—weren't so important, it is unlikely that this would be the case. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1252-1256). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Poor Test Design

#### More testing has resulted in improvements in the tests

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

9. Quality of tests. Another beneficial consequence of high-stakes testing is the effect that the introduction of consequences has had on the tests themselves. Along with more serious consequences has come heightened scrutiny. The high-stakes tests of today are surely the most meticulously developed, carefully constructed, and rigorously reported. Many criticisms of tests are valid, but a complainant who suggests that today's high-stakes tests are "lower-order" or "biased" or "inauthentic" is almost certainly not familiar with that which they purport to critique. If only due to their long history and ever-present watchdogging, high-stakes tests have evolved to a point where they are: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important, publicly-endorsed goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions. Evidence of the impulse toward heightened scrutiny of educational tests with consequences can be traced at least to the landmark case of Debra P.v.Turlington (1984). Although the central aspect of that case was the legal arguments regarding substantive and procedural due process, the abundance of evidence regarding the psychometric characteristics of Florida's graduation test was essential in terms of making the case that the process and outcomes were fundamentally fair to Florida students. Although legal challenges to such high-stakes tests still occur (see the special issue of Applied Measurement in Education (2000) for an example involving a Texas test), they are remarkably infrequent. For the most part, those responsible for mandated testing programs responded to the Debra P. case with a heightened sense of the high standard that is applied to high-stakes measures. It is a fair conclusion that, in terms of legal wranglings concerning high-stakes tests, the psychometric characteristics of the test are rarely the basis of a successful challenge. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1303-1310). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Standardized tests designed better than tests created by teachers

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

Decades of evidence have been amassed to support the contention that the quality of teacher-made tests pales compared to more rigorously developed, large-scale counterparts. Such evidence begins with the classic studies of teachers' grading practice by Starch and Elliot (1912, 1913a, 1913b) and continues with more recent studies which document that weaknesses in typical classroom assessment practices have persisted Carter, 1984; Gullickson & Ellwein, 1985). It is not an overstatement to say that, at least on the grounds of technical quality, the typical high-stakes, state-mandated test that a student takes will—by far—be the best assessment that student will see all year. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1320-1322). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Standardized testing leads to improvements in testing across the board

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

A secondary benefit of high-stakes tests' quality is that, because of their perceived importance, they become mimicked at lower levels. It is appropriate to abhor teaching to the test—at least if that phrase is taken to mean teaching the exact items that will appear on a test, or limiting instruction only to those objectives that are addressed on a high-stakes test.5 However, it is also important to recognize the beneficial effects of exposing educators to high-quality writing prompts, document-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple-choice items. It is not cheating, but the highest form of praise when educators then rely on these exemplars to enhance their own assessment practices. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1322-1327). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Teachers Cheat

#### Teacher cheating is rare

Norman R. Augustine is chairman of the National Academies’ congressionally mandated review of U.S. competitiveness. He is a former chairman and chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp, Bangor Daily News, August 3, 2013, Bangor Daily News, Here’s Why Schools Need Standardized Testing, <http://bangordailynews.com/2013/08/03/education/heres-why-schools-need-standardized-testing/> DOA: 10-25-15

Another oft-heard argument is that standardized tests drive educators to cheat. Teachers and administrators in the Atlanta public school system, for instance, were indicted this year in an alleged scheme of inflating their students’ test scores to avoid sanctions and secure performance-based bonuses. Not surprisingly, some education advocates were quick to blame the scandal on the tests themselves.

It should be noted that most teachers are honest, dedicated professionals. But even if this sort of fraud were rampant, it would be absurd to fault standardized tests. As Thomas J. Kane, director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, noted this spring, such a reaction would “be equivalent to saying ‘O.K., because there are some players that cheated in Major League Baseball, we should stop keeping score, because that only encourages people to take steroids.’ ”

### A2: Too Much Pressure on Kids

#### OK, but the alternative is not to abandon tests

Norman R. Augustine is chairman of the National Academies’ congressionally mandated review of U.S. competitiveness. He is a former chairman and chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp, Bangor Daily News, August 3, 2013, Bangor Daily News, Here’s Why Schools Need Standardized Testing, <http://bangordailynews.com/2013/08/03/education/heres-why-schools-need-standardized-testing/> DOA: 10-25-15

The third argument is that high-stakes testing places too much pressure on students. This objection is not without some merit. Having visited schools in other countries where a single five-day examination can determine a student’s future, I understand how tests can sometimes constitute cruel and unusual punishment. But surely there is a sensible middle ground between such brutal practices and full-scale abandonment of standardized testing.

Finding that middle ground has never been more important, as U.S. students continue to fall far behind their international peers. In its [most recent report](http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report-2012-2013/" \t "_blank), the World Economic Forum ranked U.S. math and science education 52nd in the world. A 2009 [evaluation of students in 34 developed nations](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011004.pdf" \t "_blank) found that U.S. 15-year-olds were outperformed in science by students from 12 countries. The results were worse in math: Students in 17 countries outperformed U.S. students.

To address U.S. students’ international achievement gap, the National Governors Association, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, a nonpartisan organization of public school officials, helped create a set of nationwide achievement goals known as the [Common Core State Standards](http://www.corestandards.org/" \t "_blank). These voluntary benchmarks in English language arts and math reflect what young Americans will need to know if they are to compete with students from China, Singapore, Finland, South Korea and elsewhere.

#### Life is demanding

Dr. Herbert Walberg is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and chairman of its Board of Directors. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor emeritus and University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research focuses on educational productivity and human accomplishments, August 1, 2011, Stop the War Against Standardize Tests, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-submission/2011/08/01/stop-war-against-standardized-tests> DOA: 10-25-15

Another complaint against standardized tests is that they cause stress among educators and students. But the world outside of school is demanding. The knowledge economy increasingly demands more knowledge and better skills from workers, which require larger amounts of intense study of difficult subjects. Yet American students spend only about half the total study time that Asian students do in regular schools, in tutoring, and in homework, a major reason for their poor performance in international surveys. Thus, reasonable pressure and objective performance measurements are advisable for the future welfare of the students and the nation.

### A2: Too Much Instructional Time is Wasted on Testing

#### Students only spend 1.6 percent of their time taking tests

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Actual test administration takes up a small fraction of learning time. Although

testing occurs frequently, students across all grade spans—even in grades 3-8,

where state standardized tests are mandated by federal law—do not spend a

great deal of school time actually taking tests. Students spend, on average, 1.6

percent of instructional time or less taking tests.

#### Test administration does not compete with a substantial amount of instructional time

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Actual test administration takes up a small fraction of learning time.

Students spend, on average, 1.6 percent or less of instructional time taking tests.

This corresponds to findings from other similar examinations of testing time.81

On average, students in grades 3-5 and 6-8 spend 15 and 16 hours, respectively,

on district and state exams. In contrast to the average total hours of instructional

time, the amount of time spent on test-taking is comparatively small.82 These

students did spend more time on state tests than district tests—nearly three

more hours, on average.

Students in grades K-2 and 9-12, who take the fewest number of tests—approximately

six tests in a year—spent the least amount of time taking tests in the year

at approximately four and nine hours, respectively. The fact that these students

do not take or are less frequently tested using federally required state exams is a

contributing factor.

### A2: Narrows Curriculum to Math and Science

#### This isn’t a bad thing – students need to learn the basics

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Some experts, however, do not see this narrowing of the curriculum as a necessarily bad thing. In an interview with the HPR, Chester E. Finn, Jr., a senior fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy think tank, explained, “Until you’ve got kids at least minimally proficient in reading and math, you’re really not going to have very much success teaching them anything else.” Grover Whitehurst, the former director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, echoed this sentiment in an interview with the HPR, saying that “kids are not well served by marching band if, in fact, they can’t read and do math.”

### A2: Accountability Provisions Bad

#### Can support testing and not accountability provisions

[Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/whitehurstg), [Martin R. West](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/westm), [Matthew M. Chingos](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/chingosm) and [Mark Dynarski](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/dynarskim), January 8, 2015, The Case for Annual Testing, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/01/08-chalkboard-annual-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

Conservatives, generally, want to rein in federal control of education while driving bottom-up reforms by empowering parents with greater choice of where to send their children to school.  Choice is empty without valid information on school performance (like going online to choose a restaurant for dinner and finding no reviews), and student learning is the most critical school function on which customers need performance data.  Conservatives should favor a federal role in collecting and disseminating this information.  And it doesn’t have to be the same test across the nation to provide this information, or even a single end-of-the-year test as opposed to a series of tests given across the year that can be rolled-up into an estimate of annual growth.  All that is required is something that tests what a school intends to teach and is normed to a state or national population.

Progressives have a strong commitment to educational equity and adequacy for historically disadvantaged populations.  They think that funding is critical, but nearly all understand that how the money is spent and to what ends is equally important.  One of the undeniable successes of NCLB was to expose to public scrutiny the failures of many of our public schools to adequately educate disadvantaged subgroups.  If information on student learning from annual testing disappears, so too will the attention to the needs of subgroups that are illuminated through annual testing.  Progressives should support annual testing for reasons of equity.

Concerned parents are reacting to test prep regimes for annual tests, not the tests themselves (which take no more than a day of school time to administer).  If the federal targets for test scores and associated sanctions are jettisoned, so too should much of the test prep regime.  Test scores become, then, one among several forms of information on school performance that parents should value and consume.  Parents who are concerned about their children’s schooling should want to know how their school of choice is performing on state tests, as well as the satisfaction of parents and students who are served by the school, the experience and effectiveness of its teachers, the extent to which the school prepares its students for the next step in their education journey, the school’s extracurricular activities and degree of student engagement, and  other factors that people care about and can be made available for public scrutiny.  Surely, such parents no more want to be in the dark about a K-12 school’s academic performance than they would want to ignore the quality of the college to which their child will eventually seek enrollment.

Teacher unions may be a lost cause on annual testing because of the harsh stance they have already taken and their awareness that information on individual differences in teacher effectiveness is a powerful lever that doesn’t require a federal accountability mandate to be put to use by reform-oriented school districts.  But even they may see value in a horse trade in which Congress eliminates federal requirements for states to evaluate teachers based on test scores but retains annual testing.

The performance of the nation’s education system is critical to our future and to the lives of the students who experience it.  The fundamental responsibility of schools is student learning.  Valid estimates of student learning that strongly predict later life outcomes can be derived from annual academic tests.  Much depends on the continued collection and dissemination of such information.  Only the federal government is in a position to see that it happens.  Congress can reauthorize ESEA, retain the requirement for annual tests that yield measures of student growth, and satisfy a diverse set of political factions if it focuses on its responsibility to see that valid information on school performance is available for all to use while pulling back from previous efforts to insert the U.S. Department of Education into roles that were previously reserved to states and school districts.

### A2: Generally Not Fair

#### Standardized tests are designed to be fair

Stephen Sireci, psychometrician, University of Amherst, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

On the other hand standardized tests are designed to be as similar as possible for all test takers. The logic behind standardization stems from the scientific method. Standardize all conditions and any variation across measurements is due to differences in the characteristic being measured, which in educational testing is some type of knowledge, skill, or other proficiency. To claim that a test is standardized means that it is developed according to carefully designed test specifications, it is administered under uniform conditions for everyone, the scoring of the test is the same for everyone, and different forms of the test are statistically and qualitatively equivalent. Thus, in testing, standardization is tantamount with fairness. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 3229-3234). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Puts Pressure on Teachers

#### Teachers do fine and there are multiple evaluations

Kevin Huffman is a fellow with New America and served as commissioner of education in Tennessee from 2011 to 2015, October 30, 2015, Washington Post, We Don’t Test Students as Much as People Think We Do, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-test-students-as-much-as-people-think-we-do-and-the-stakes-arent-really-that-high/2015/10/30/3d66de1c-7e79-11e5-beba-927fd8634498_story.html> DOA: 10-31-15

Okay, but what about all that punishment? Maybe it isn’t the length of time — it’s the “high stakes” involved in the testing. Except this just isn’t the case. In most states that have implemented teacher evaluations, [nearly all teachers](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/02/06/20evaluate_ep.h32.html) perform at or above expectations. Additionally, states already use “multiple measures” to evaluate teachers. There are literally no states that use only test scores in their evaluations.

#### Teachers don’t get fired over poor test scores

Kevin Huffman is a fellow with New America and served as commissioner of education in Tennessee from 2011 to 2015, October 30, 2015, Washington Post, We Don’t Test Students as Much as People Think We Do, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-test-students-as-much-as-people-think-we-do-and-the-stakes-arent-really-that-high/2015/10/30/3d66de1c-7e79-11e5-beba-927fd8634498_story.html> DOA: 10-31-15

The truth is, it’s nearly impossible for a teacher to get fired because of poor test scores. And for schools, significant interventions generally happen at just the bottom 5 percent of campuses. Poor test results may be embarrassing when released publicly, which can lead schools to scramble into drill-and-kill test-prep mode. But the claims of massive stakes driven by federal or state law are overwrought.

### A2: National Curriculum Bad

#### Common Core is not a national curriculum. Teachers and schools still have control over content.

Common Core State Standards Initiative, No Date — Common Core State Standards Initiative, Copyright 2015 (“Myths vs. Facts,” Common Core State Standards Initiative, Available Online at <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts/>, Accessed 06-29-2015)

Myth: These standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

Fact: The Common Core is not a curriculum. It is a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

#### Their criticism of common core is based on bureaucratic myths — it doesn’t promote groupthink or mandate particular texts.

Bennett 14 — William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin, J.D. from Harvard Law School, 2014 ("The Conservative Case for Common Core," *Wall Street Journal*, September 10th, Available Online at http://www.wsj.com/articles/william-j-bennett-the-conservative-case-for-common-core-1410390435, Accessed 7-6-2015)

Why then is Common Core drawing such heavy fire? Some of the criticism is legitimate, but much of it is based on myths. For example, a myth persists that Common Core involves a required reading list. Not so. Other than four seminal historical documents—the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address—there is no required reading list. Textbook companies have marketed their books disingenuously, leading many parents to believe that under Common Core the government mandates particular textbooks. Also not true.

The standards are designed to invite states to take control and to build upon them further. The standards do not prescribe what is taught in our classrooms or how it's taught. That decision should always rest with local school districts and school boards.

The principles behind the Common Core affirm a great intellectual tradition and inheritance. We should not allow them to be hijacked by the federal government or misguided bureaucrats and politicos.

### A2: Corporate Control of Education Bad

#### Education isn’t neoliberal because of Common Core — state standards mean education is always for the purpose of producing economically productive individuals

Hursh 1 — David Hursh, Professor of Teaching and Curriculum, PhD in Curriculum theory and research from the University of Wisconsin Madison, M.S. in family and child development from Kansas State University, 2001 (“Neoliberalism and the Control of Teachers, Students, and Learning: The Rise of Standards, Standardization, and Accountability,” *Cultural Logic*, Vol. 1 Num. 1, Available online at <http://clogic.eserver.org/4-1/hursh.html>, Accessed 7-8-15)

Paradoxically, neo-liberalism, alongside its critique of the deadening consequences of the 'intrusion' of the state' into the life of the individual, has none the less provoked the invention and/or deployment of a whole array of organizational forms and technical methods in order to extend the field in which a certain kind of economic freedom might be practiced in the form of personal autonomy, enterprise, and choice. (Barry, et al., p. 10)

State Departments of Education increasingly intrude into the lives of teachers and teacher educators. They undertake their regulation through, writes Barry et al., "technical methods such as accountings and auditing" (Barry et al., p. 11). Regulation occurs through technical means of standards, testing, and measuring that "tie techniques of conduct into specific relations with the concerns of government" and that "reconnect, in a productive way, studies of the exercise of power at the 'molecular level' [in schools] with strategies to program power at a molar level" (Barry et al., p. 13). Further, as reflected in state departments of education implementation of standards and standardized tests:

Public authorities seek to employ forms of expertise in order to govern society at a distance, without recourse to any direct forms of repression or intervention. Neo-liberalism, in these terms, involves less a retreat from governmental 'intervention' than a re-inscription of the techniques and forms of expertise required for the exercise of government. (Barry et al., p. 14)

Governmental and quasi-governmental organizations seek to govern without specifying exactly what must be done, but by presenting the requirements or standards as rational and non-controversial, and providing a limited range in which it must be implemented. This makes it possible for social actors, such as teachers, to have a false sense of choice and freedom. As Rose writes, the 'formal political institutions" govern from a distance and "conceive of these actors as subjects of responsibility, autonomy, and choice, and seek to act upon them through shaping and utilizing their freedom" (Rose, 1995, pp. 53- 4).

21. The neo-liberal states, through the use of standards, assessments, and accountability, aims to restrict educators to particular kinds of thinking, thinking that conceptualizes education in terms of producing individuals who are economically productive. Education is no longer valued for its role in developing political, ethical, and aesthetic citizens. Instead, the goal has become promoting knowledge that contributes to economic productivity and producing students who are compliant and productive. Blackmore summarizes that "educational policy has shifted emphasis from input and process to outcomes, from the liberal to the vocational, from education's intrinsic to its instrumental value, and from qualitative to quantitative measures of success" (2000, p. 34).

#### No solvency — our education system is fundamentally neoliberal. You’d have to get rid of schools entirely to solve.

Thinnes 13 — Chris Thinnes, member of the national Board of Directors of the Progressive Education Network, Founding Executive Director of the Center for the Future of Education & Democracy, former Head and Academic Dean at Curtis Upper Elementary School, Ed.D. in Education Leadership for Social Justice, 2013 (“The Root, Stem, Leaves, & Fruit of American Education,” *chris.thinnes.me,* May 19th, Available online at <http://chris.thinnes.me/?p=1614>, Accessed 7-8-15)

We are preoccupied as a nation with products, rather than processes; with competition, rather than collaboration; with dominance, rather than participation; with achievement, rather than imagination; and with results, rather than with passion. The same has become true in our schools.

This internalization of neoliberal commitments to the individual achievements of our students and teachers, and the market competition of our schools, is naturalized even in our most informal, everyday conversations about education. It is enforced by many of our classroom practices. It is celebrated in many of our school-wide rituals. But I find it perhaps most disturbing when it frames our thoughts, subconsciously or purposefully, about how to improve our schools.

We repudiate our own proud history, legacy, experience, and wisdom as educators — uncritically accepting the sweeping proposition that schools have ‘failed,’ that education is in a ‘crisis,’ and that we must redefine our schools anew — and graft the faddish theories of free market innovation (the more ‘disruptive’, the better) onto our school models in our thought experiments about education. Our efforts to be imaginative, and our commitment continually to improve, should be commended. But the language system we use to frame our thinking, and the beliefs about the purpose of schooling on which that language system rests, are disturbing. “Who is the ‘client’ we’re trying to serve?” I was asked in a debate on voucher legislation. “We need to create a ‘customer-centric’ model to the education system,” I was lectured by a ‘school choice’ advocate. “We need to learn from other ‘content providers’ and their ‘delivery systems’,” I’ve heard more than once. And we hear all the time, especially but not exclusively in independent schools, that “we need to ensure that our school remains ‘competitive’ in the ‘education marketplace.'” The dilemma, of course, as I put it in one exchange, is that

schools are not selling a product; stakeholders aren’t customers; and teaching and learning aren’t commodities… This language system of ‘customer,’ ‘client,’ ‘innovation,’ and ‘market’ is precisely the language system that has been appropriated by the ‘choice’ movement, corporate interests trying to profit from the educational market, and pundits and wonks who allege we need to ‘save’ our ‘failing’ schools. These gestures don’t help to support public education, but to destroy it — restricting our thought about the possibilities and the value of education to the degree that they impose the market model, and its language system, on the discourse and our decisions.

I don’t think it’s a ‘customer’ but a ‘purpose’ that education serves — whether that’s to develop an informed and active citizenry; to prepare children for college, careers, and their futures; to create a context in which children can learn to interact, to think, to create; and so on … stakeholders’ efforts to realize those principles and promises seem to be what’s framed the evolution of the institution’s goals and systems in its best iterations—in the spirit of a social compact, more so than a corporate contract.

The end-run of the logic of the ‘free market model’ and its application to schools is simple: the repudiation of schools as we have come to know them; the abandonment of democratic principles on which they are based; and the service of a technocratic vision of education as matrix of individual relationships with private providers. In recent years, this vision takes the form of crude assertions that online learning platforms might not only extend or enrich the learning that takes place in schools, but might obviate the need for the ‘school’ as we know it. [1]

#### Citizens United makes long-term corporate control inevitable.

Balakrishnan 10 — Radhika Balakrishnan, Faculty Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University 2010 ("Corporate Control of Our Democracy: Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission," Huffington Post, July 12th, Available Online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/radhika-balakrishnan/corporate-control-of-our\_b\_643095.html, Accessed 7-9-2015)

This January the U.S. Supreme Court issued a shattering ruling that will intensify corporate influence in our democracy to an unprecedented degree. In Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, the Court ruled that government restrictions on corporate election spending are unconstitutional because such restrictions violated corporations' right to free speech as set out in the first amendment of the Bill of Rights. In effect, the Court was evoking a core civil right to advance corporate power. This is a dangerous precedent, one that will undermine the obligation of the government to respect and protect human rights by giving corporations full reign to advance their own interests in the democratic - yet increasingly plutocratic - United States.

#### The Con mischaracterizes the debate – corporations have an incentive to foster innovative and critical thinking in education – “corporate interests” consist of problem-solving, sustainability, creativity, and closing opportunity gaps.

Schiller and Arena 12 –Judah Schiller and Christine Arena, Founders of AIKO, an independent agency dedicated to building brands with purpose. Schiller was CEO of a Publicis Group agency where he pioneered new ways of infusing creativity and meaning into brands and corporate cultures. Arena is the award-winning author of two books: "The High Purpose Company" and "Cause for Success." She was recently named a 'Top 100 Thought Leader in Trustworthy Business’, 2012 (“How Corporations Are Helping To Solve The Education Crisis”, Fast Company, March 22, Available Online at http://www.fastcoexist.com/1679529/how-corporations-are-helping-to-solve-the-education-crisis, accessed 7/10/15, KM)

Over the past decade, climate change evidence has triggered thousands of corporations to think and act beyond the boundaries of policy. Today’s education statistics do the very same thing. Looking more closely at the facts, it’s not difficult to comprehend why. We’re in a situation where a quarter of our children drop out of high school every year. Two-fifths of those who do graduate leave high school unprepared for college or career, while 57% (PDF) lack comprehension of even remedial math. Apparently the national disinterest in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and math) starts early, as over 61% (PDF) of middle schoolers would rather take out the garbage than do their math homework. Eighty percent of the jobs created in the next decade will require some mastery of technology, math, and science. This data is particularly troublesome when you consider that in the past 10 years, growth in STEM jobs has been three times greater than that of non-STEM jobs. Going forward, this trend is expected to continue. The National Science Foundation estimates that 80% of the jobs created in the next decade will require some mastery of technology, math, and science. A recent McKinsey study shows that two-thirds of those jobs don’t even exist today. Education is key to keeping kids confident and America competitive. There is a clear business case for solving this crisis, which is why education is fast becoming a front and center issue for talent-hungry corporations, many of whom view the problem as an opportunity. Just as with environmental sustainability, corporate investments in education get deeper all the time. Intel has to date given $1 billion to support education. Target, Cisco, and IBM are poised to do the same. Goldman Sachs, AT&T, and Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg have each donated $100 million or more in recent years. But how effective are these investments in the grand scheme of things? Where’s the ROI? That depends on the strategies employed. Corporations have a role beyond just providing money. "Corporations have a role beyond just providing money," says Sandi Everlove, interim CEO at Washington STEM, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to advancing STEM. "There’s this tendency to think that we can throw money at the problem and fix it. That’s simply not true. We need capacity building—companies sharing their unique resources in order to fill critical gaps." As Everlove indicates, it’s one thing to "education wash," donating to a few choice causes and generating some positive publicity. But it’s quite another thing to strengthen a fledgling education system by lending otherwise proprietary human, technical, and intellectual capital. Smart companies are finding that the more they do so, the more momentum and demand they create for what they provide, and the smarter they get about innovating around what’s truly needed in the education space. It’s a virtuous cycle of self-improvement. INNOVATING EDUCATION Together with corporate partner Microsoft, Washington STEM aims to elevate the learning experiences of one million kids, bringing next-generation ideas, technologies, and curriculum to classrooms across the state. The alliance demonstrates what can happen when private and public entities coordinate agendas to drive needed change. "As a partner, Microsoft does a lot more than give us dollars," Everlove says. "They really get into the community, roll up their sleeves and help address education problems that are easy for them to solve, but huge for schools to achieve." That’s part of a larger social innovation strategy at Microsoft. The company recently shifted all of its corporate citizenship efforts toward closing what it characterizes as the opportunity divide—a chasm that separates those who prosper in our society from those who don’t. In addition to providing a profitable portfolio of products like Office 2010 and Kinect for Xbox 360 that help bring education alive for kids, the company also partners with hundreds of NGOs around the world to help young people gain access to the tools they need in order to realize their full potential. Thus far Microsoft’s Partners in Learning program has channeled $500 million toward education systems around the world, reaching more than 196 million teachers and students in 114 countries. It’s not just about technology. It’s about bringing innovation to schools. "Our goal is to embrace the bigness of the challenge that government and society face in terms of transforming education in a holistic way," says Vice President of Microsoft Worldwide Education Anthony Salcito. "It’s not just about technology. It’s about bringing innovation to schools. How do you personalize the education experience? How do you incorporate new modes of classroom design and curriculum, or think about assessment differently? How do you change a kid’s vision of his future?" The questions Salcito contemplates are fundamental to the process of reinventing a system that no longer meets the needs of the population it serves. Today’s public schools were designed for 19th-century industrialism, not an era of globalization and interconnectivity. Evidence of this inadequacy abounds: Standards and textbooks have grown outdated. Campuses are becoming dreary and homogenized. Teachers are increasingly disenfranchised. Students remain largely uninspired. And as a result, corporations are hard pressed to recruit new talent. These issues require more than federal funding and moderate reforms. "This is a large task and it can’t be put off," says Salcito. "We have to acknowledge that learning is shifting away from content memorization to a more relevant, personalized, skill-based foundation. We have to dig deeper, think harder and get more engaged to determine what change is needed and then push the pieces forward. We also have to bring a culture of sustainability to the process of transforming education."' We have to bring a culture of sustainability to the process of transforming education. As part of its sustainable approach to transforming education, Microsoft provides an ecosystem of building blocks that allow great ideas to emerge, grow, and spread. For instance, Microsoft’s Imagine Cup encourages students to utilize technology to solve the world’s toughest problems, many of which revolve around education. The company’s Partners in Learning for Schools and Partners in Learning for Teachers programs challenge educators to innovate within the school system. Grants, social capital investments, and an innovation tool kit help bring winning concepts to scale. An open-source software platform allows people to build new educational content (i.e. apps, tools, and games) that make products like Kinect and Windows Phone all the more valuable. Aside from making it a smarter and richer company, Microsoft’s "opportunity divide" mission has also revitalized the corporate culture. According to Senior Director of Community Affairs Akhtar Badshah, employees have never been so engaged. "The new focus on education has really energized our people," says Badshah. "Aside from giving them a common purpose, it has encouraged them to participate in some very creative and enterprising ways." Badshah says that in addition to volunteering over 383,000 hours and raising over $100.5 million for good causes last year, Microsoft employees are also responsible for the ideas behind some of the company’s signature education programs. One example is TEALS (Technology Education and Literacy in Schools), an initiative that brings Microsoft employees to high school computer science classes across the country, giving school’s access highly qualified teachers without incurring training or development costs. "The idea that as a company, we are helping to fill a massive gap is really a catalyst for us," says Badshah. "We can now better measure, manage, and grow our impact, and feel great about what we are doing at the same time." We expect to see many more companies invest deeply in education, not simply as a cause du jour, but as a means of innovation and marketplace survival.

#### Corporations are benign – companies support student efforts to solve global issues like poverty and environmental destruction. Moreover, they help underfunded schools maintain extracurricular activities like science fairs that are good for critical thinking.

Watters 11 –Audrey Watters, reports on education technology, 2011 (“What Role Do Corporations Play in Supporting STEM Education?”, KQED News, July 19, Available Online at http://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2011/07/19/what-role-do-corporations-play-in-supporting-stem-education/, accessed 7/10/15)

Last week, as part of the Imagine Cup award ceremony, Hal Plotkin, the Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of the Under Secretary of Education, praised Microsoft for its commitment to STEM education with its hosting of the global student technology competition. Plotkin encouraged other companies to step up and invest in these sorts of endeavors. As the projects submitted to the Imagine Cup must tackle the UN’s Millennium Goals – poverty, hunger, disease, infant mortality, environmental destruction, and so on – it’s not just good for the U.S. education system, it’s good for the world. Microsoft is not the only corporation involved in promoting STEM education. Earlier this year, MindShift profiled the Change the Equation non-profit, through which companies like ExxonMobil, Dell and Lockheed Martin have supported science and technology education. Intel says it’s spent over $1 billion on education projects. And just last week, Google announced the winners of its first online global science fair, just one of the many programs that the search engine giant has undertaken to help encourage budding scientists, engineers, and programmers. Corporate sponsorship and funding is seen as necessary to help boost the programs that oftentimes schools can’t afford. That seems to be particularly true when it comes to student competitions and science fairs, as these sorts of “extracurricular” projects are often on the chopping block when schools look to streamline their budgets.

### A2: Surveillance Bad

#### There are many non-Common Core surveillance programs that target children.

Newman 13 — Alex Newman, president of Liberty Sentinel Media, Inc., a small information consulting firm, degree in journalism from the University of Florida, foreign correspondent for The New American magazine, writes for several publications in the U.S. and abroad, 2013

Already, there are numerous systems being used and deployed across America aimed at compiling unprecedented amounts of data on students. Some are run by private organizations with government assistance; others are operated by authorities directly. All of them are extremely controversial, however, with parents and privacy advocates outraged.

Among the data schemes that have received a great deal of attention in recent months is “inBloom.” As with the new national education standards called Common Core, it is also funded by Bill Gates and the Carnegie Corporation. With at least nine states participating in the $100 million program already, the non-profit entity, which shares data with whomever authorities choose, is quickly gobbling up vast quantities of information.

Respected experts such as attorney Michael Farris, president of ParentalRights.org, pointed out that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child committee has repeatedly pressured governments to create similar national databases on children, albeit using different pretexts. Even liberals have expressed opposition. “Turning massive amounts of personal data about public school students to a private corporation without any public input is profoundly disturbing and irresponsible,” said New York Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Donna Lieberman, slamming authorities for failing to disclose the scheme or offer parents an opt-out.

In conjunction with inBloom, other systems are being funded and largely directed by the federal government itself. Using the same unconstitutional process as the one used to foist Common Core on state governments — a combination of federal bribes, waivers, and more — the Obama administration all but forced cash-strapped states to start monitoring and tracking student information, or to expand their existing systems.

Previous administrations and U.S. lawmakers also contributed to the problem, with the foundations having been laid dec­ades ago. Before Obama, the Bush-era No Child Left Behind Act, for instance, among myriad other demands, called on states seeking federal funds to create “unique statewide identifiers” for each student. Under Obama, the process has accelerated at an unprecedented rate.

#### States and federally-funded tutoring programs collect student biometric data. This is a much bigger invasion of privacy and creates far more government control than Common Core.

Newman 13 — Alex Newman, president of Liberty Sentinel Media, Inc., a small information consulting firm, degree in journalism from the University of Florida, foreign correspondent for The New American magazine, writes for several publications in the U.S. and abroad, 2013

As technology advances, the federal government’s Orwellian data gathering will — without action to stop it — almost certainly expand beyond most people’s wildest nightmares. In fact, it already has. Consider, for example, a February 2013 report by the Department of Education dubbed Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21st Century. Included in the 100-page report is information about technology already being used in an Education Department-funded tutoring program.

“Researchers are exploring how to gather complex affective data and generate meaningful and usable information to feed back to learners, teachers, researchers, and the technology itself,” the report explains. “Connections to neuroscience are also beginning to emerge.” (Emphasis added.) The technological tools already being used by federally funded education schemes to probe students’ minds and “measure” the children include, as described in the report, “four parallel streams of affective sensors.”

Among the devices in use today through a federally funded tutoring scheme is a “facial expression camera” used to “detect emotion” and “capture facial expressions.” According to the report, the camera is linked to software that “extracts geometric properties on faces.” There is also a “posture analysis seat” and a “pressure mouse.” Finally, the report describes a “wireless skin conductance sensor” strapped to students’ wrists. The sensors collect “physiological response data from a biofeedback apparatus that measures blood volume, pulse, and galvanic skin response to examine student frustration.” Again, these systems are already being used in government-funded programs, and with technology racing ahead, developments are expected to become increasingly troubling.

Another Education Department report, entitled Enhancing, Teaching and Learning Through Educational Data Mining and Learning Analytics, acknowledges similarly alarming schemes. “A student learning database (or other big data repository) stores time-stamped student input and behaviors captured as students work within the system,” it notes. “A predictive model combines demographic data (from an external student information system) and learning/behavior data from the student learning database to track a student’s progress and make predictions about his or her future behaviors or performance.” (Emphasis added.)

All across the country today, Big Brother-like technological developments in biometrics are also making schools increasingly Orwellian. Earlier this year in Polk County, Florida, for example, students’ irises were scanned without parental consent. “It simply takes a picture of the iris, which is unique to every individual,” wrote the school board’s “senior director of support services” in a letter to parents. “With this program, we will be able to identify when and where a student gets on the bus, when they arrive at their school location, when and what bus the student boards and disembarks in the afternoon. This is an effort to further enhance the safety of our students. The EyeSwipe-Nano is an ideal replacement for the card based system since your child will not have to be responsible for carrying an identification card.”

In San Antonio, Texas, meanwhile, a female student made national news — and exposed what was going on — when she got in a legal battle with school officials over her refusal to wear a mandatory radio-frequency identification (RFID) device. The same devices are already being implanted under people’s skin in America and abroad — albeit voluntarily. Also in the biometric field, since at least 2007, children in states like Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New Jersey have been fingerprinted at school under the guise of “school lunch” programs and other pretexts.

Despite fierce opposition, the trend toward using biometric data to identify and track students while collecting unimaginable amounts of information is accelerating. The federal government is helping lead the way toward abolishing any vestiges of privacy, and aside from NSA spying on virtually everyone, students appear to be among the primary targets. Without major resistance, experts predict that someday — perhaps even in the very near future — biometric identification will become ubiquitous. Combined with all of the other data being collected, the federal government may finally achieve what was sought by tyrants throughout history: detailed 24/7 information on everything, about everyone.

### Keep Tests/Use them Better

#### We should keep tests but use them better/differently

Lelac Almagor, September 2, 2014, Boston Review, The Good in Standardized Testing, <http://bostonreview.net/us/lelac-almagor-finding-good-in-standardized-testing> DOA: 10-25-15

If we could give these harder tests internally and get back detailed results—share them only with parents, and use them only to improve our own planning—many more teachers would embrace them. Liberated from the testing tricks and stamina lessons, we would embrace more honest feedback about where our students are and how they still need to grow.

The trouble is that we know the scores can and will be used against us and our students. Those who interpret the results in public don’t focus on the needs of the individual. Nor do they seek to identify and propagate the most effective instructional practices. Instead they use the scores to judge who is capable and incapable; to bar access to opportunity; to dismiss and diminish our successes; to justify rather than fight against educational inequality.

In this atmosphere of fear, it is difficult to look forward to more-rigorous tests and the detailed results they produce. Our instinct is to shield our students—and ourselves. Instead of dropping test prep from the schedule, we are tempted to push it to the point of absurdity, in case those old tricks might serve us better than the truth.

The first project for policymakers, then, is to restore our trust in measurement as a tool for making schools better—not for tearing them down. Give the challenging tests, without watering down the content or curving the results, but don’t use scores to pass and fail. Instead, focus on identifying the interventions that really work for students from similar backgrounds and with similar needs: the tests should be used for research, not judgment.

The next step is to disrupt the culture of test anxiety, test preparation, test rewards, and the suddenly ubiquitous pre-exam pep rally. One proposal: stop testing all the students all at once, at the end of the year, in a culminating district-wide trial-by-fire. Instead, treat academic testing like the rotating hearing test or scoliosis checkup. Sample two or three students at random and without preparation, every week throughout the year. Sit them at a computer. Let them click through the test with little fuss. Measure what they can do on that day, share the data with teachers and parents, and then send them right back to class.

Managing only a few kids at a time would simplify testing logistics for schools. The test material is computer- and cloud-based, adaptive, and easy to update, so test security is less burdensome. Students can’t share answers when they don’t face the same questions.

Most important, by testing kids individually, we would reframe testing as a source of information rather than evaluation. We’d reduce the incentive to cheat or prep and instead put the emphasis back where it belongs—on what students need and on how can we help them truly learn.

### Teacher Education/Training/Teacher Performance

#### Standardized assessments improve teacher education

Charles Peck, University of Washington, 2014, Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, May 2014, 8(1), pp. 8-30, Driving Blind: Why We Need Standardized Performance Assessment in Teacher Education

In this article, we address this problem by making an argument for the unique affordances of one specific type of program outcome measure as a tool for improvement of teacher education: standardized performance assessments of teaching. In doing so, we do not intend to imply that other types of outcome measures (e.g., graduate and employer satisfaction surveys, placement and retention studies, value-added measures of P-12 student achievement) cannot be used in sensible ways as tools for evaluating program quality. On the contrary, we follow others in observing that no single measure is by itself an entirely adequate means of evaluating the effectiveness of individual teachers (Cantrell & Kane, 2013), much less the quality of a teacher preparation program (Feuer et al., 2013). Our claim, however, is that standardized teaching performance assessments (TPAs1) are uniquely valuable with respect to the role that they can play in both motivating and guiding concrete actions aimed at program improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Peck & McDonald, 2013).

#### Teacher performance assessments improve education

Charles Peck, University of Washington, 2014, Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, May 2014, 8(1), pp. 8-30, Driving Blind: Why We Need Standardized Performance Assessment in Teacher Education

Several distinguishing features of TPAs are fundamental to their value as sources of concrete and actionable feedback to program faculty, academic leaders, and teacher candidates. Perhaps most important, TPAs are by design aimed at producing rich and concrete descriptions of teacher performance in the contexts of practical activity (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Records of performance produced in actual classroom teaching events, such as lesson plans, video clips of teaching, and samplesof P-12 student work, provide concrete and richly contextualized documentation of teaching *practice* that may be directly related to the goals and processes of instruction within programs of teacher preparation. This may be contrasted with more abstract kinds of information yielded by other program evaluation measures, such as satisfaction surveys or value-added measures based on P-12 student achievement. Data from surveys or value-added measures may signal cause for concern in specific program areas -- but these kinds of data provide relatively little guidance in identifying the sources of identified problems or strategies for improvement. TPAs also differ in important ways from direct observational measures of classroom interaction (e.g., Pianta & Hamre, 2009), insofar as TPAs attempt to provide more complete accounts of teaching practice, including artifacts of curriculum planning and assessment and evaluation processes, in addition to observational records of interactions between teachers and students. This means that TPAs afford a particularly rich descriptive context for interpreting some of the antecedents (e.g., planning skills) and outcomes (e.g., samples of student work) of instructional interactions between teachers and students.

#### Assessments need to be standardized

Charles Peck, University of Washington, 2014, Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, May 2014, 8(1), pp. 8-30, Driving Blind: Why We Need Standardized Performance Assessment in Teacher Education

In this article, we have reviewed evidence that suggests the unique value of standardized teacher performance assessment as a tool for improvement of teacher preparation. We have illustrated the affordances of TPAs in terms of the opportunities for learning that they can offer candidates, faculty, programs, and the field of teacher education. A critical feature of these tools lies in their *standardization* by which we refer to the process through which scorers achieve consistent ratings of candidate teaching performance. We are not naïve about the dilemmas and paradoxes of power, voice, and resistance that inevitably accompany any process of standardization. And we are respectful of thoughtful critiques of standardization grounded in these dilemmas (e.g., Au, 2013). However, we are also not naïve about the extent to which the absence of a common and concrete language of practice operates as a profound barrier to substantive collaboration and coherence within individual programs of teacher education contributes to the ongoing failure of the field to effectively engage perennial problems of connections between courses and fieldwork and inhibits the development of a useful professional knowledge-base for the field. Developing consistent (that is, *standardized*) definitions and interpretive frameworks that can be used to evaluate concrete examples of teaching practice is what allows TPAs to function as a common language of practice and as a tool for communication, collaboration, and improvement of the work of teacher preparation. It is worth noting that such a language may itself be critiqued and amended as needed to support valued outcomes and emergent practices (e.g., Stillman et al., 2013). A common language developed through a TPA need not be a dead language.

### Education Impacts

#### Education is key to U.S. world power – declining education trends risk decreases in stability

Council on Foreign Relations 12 – The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent think tank dedicated to being a resource for its members in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries, 2012 (“U.S. Education Reform and National Security,” CFR Independent Task Force Report No. 68, March 2012, available online via <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/us-education-reform-national-security/p27618>, accessed on 7/8/15

In a broader sense, the growing gap between the educated and the undereducated is creating a widening chasm that divides Americans and has the potential to tear at the fabric of society. As problems within the American education system have worsened, mobility that was possible in previous generations has waned. For the first time, most Americans think it is unlikely that today’s youth will have a better life than their parents.26 With wider income inequality and an increase in poverty, young people born to poor parents are now less likely to perform well in school and graduate from college than their better-off peers, and they are increasingly less likely to rise out of poverty.27 This trend not only causes the American Dream to appear out of reach to more citizens but also breeds isolationism and fear. The Task Force fears that this trend could cause the United States to turn inward and become less capable of being a stabilizing force in the world, which it has been since the mid-twentieth century. In short, unequal educational opportunities and the resulting achievement gap have a direct impact on national security. Large, undereducated swaths of the population damage the ability of the United States to physically defend itself, protect its secure information, conduct diplomacy, and grow its economy. The unrelenting gap separating peers from peers also renders the American Dream off limits to many young people. Task Force members fear this inequality may have a long-term effect on U.S. culture and civil society.

# Common Core Good

### Common Core Improves Education

#### Common Core improves education – contextual learning, modernizing tests, and improving critical thinking and fluency.

Witte 15 – Brian Witte, professional SAT tutor with Varsity Tutors and holds a Ph.D. from Ohio State University, 2015 (“What Common Core Teaches Us About the Future of Testing”, Time, June 29, Available Online at http://time.com/3940638/common-core-future-testing/, accessed 7/6/15, KM)

Shifting emphasis to understanding over rote Whether you love it or loathe it, the Common Core State Standards Initiative has officially arrived in American classrooms. The origin of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, or the Common Core for short, is a widely recognized need for uniformity in United States education. In other words, a diploma from a suburban California school should mean that a student is as well prepared for college and the workforce as a student from rural Iowa or urban New York. The debate around the Common Core has been fierce, but this article will not revisit it. Instead, it will shed light on three things the Common Core assessments teach us about the future of testing: 1. Contextual learning One feature of the Common Core that resonates with students, parents, and schools alike is the increased importance of understanding concepts in their natural contexts. Students no longer learn simple word definitions; they learn to decode the nuances of a word as it is used in a specific passage. Similarly, knowing how to construct an equation based on a given scenario is just as important as being able to solve that equation for x. In a sense, this is no different from what many great teachers have always done. However, some teachers were forced to emphasize rote memorization of basic facts in order to prepare their students for standardized tests. These instructors can now begin to re-emphasize understanding. 2. New testing directions As one might expect, a new set of standards calls for a new set of assessments to evaluate how well these objectives are being met. The Common Core does not include any standardized tests, so the exams that debuted widely this year are developed and administered by several different groups, including the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. While each state can choose which test to give, they are alike in emphasizing context and fluency of knowledge. Both groups are also attempting to make their exams more interactive by incorporating computer-based assessments. The interactive elements of Common Core-affiliated testing are still in their infancy, but it is clear that the future lies with computers. Students might one day be asked to highlight the sentence in a passage that best supports a thesis, or that defines a term, or that disproves another statement. Math problems could be constructed to involve drawing geometric figures, or, for younger children, grouping objects by type using a mouse. 3. Critical thinking and fluency A traditional test question might provide a student with a vocabulary word, and then ask him or her to choose the single best synonym from a list of five possible choices. A slightly more sophisticated question might use the form of an analogy where definitions for three individual terms would have to be parsed in order to secure a correct answer for the fourth word. On a Common Core assessment, a student might be asked to define an underlined word in a passage, and he or she may then have to choose from a set of phrases that are all possible definitions of the term. “State,” for example, is not a challenging word on its own, but it has several distinct meanings. One benefit of this approach is that adept students can puzzle out the meaning of an unfamiliar word using clues from the surrounding text. If the rest of the paragraph discussed politics, for example, any unrelated answer phrases could likely be ruled out. The new format, then, emphasizes critical thinking and reading comprehension over simple memorization. Fluency is also critical in the Common Core era. Fluency refers to understanding information thoroughly – inside and out, backward and forward, etc. In math, for example, it is not sufficient to simply memorize the Pythagorean Theorem (a2 + b2 = c2 for right triangles). You would also need to know when it is an applicable technique. For example, you might be told that movers trying to load a truck want to roll a heavy piece of equipment aboard (rather than lifting it). If the truck bed is three feet high, and if they have a ramp that is 12 feet long, how much room will they need to leave such that the ramp can be laid out straight behind the truck? The great news is that the ACT and the SAT are moving to similar formats, so the time spent preparing for Common Core exams during the K-12 years can be applied to college entrance tests too. In short, almost all of our pre-college education is currently attempting to shift its emphasis to understanding over rote. The success of that shift remains to be seen, but in the meantime, it is well worth considering the bigger picture and knowing all possible applications of material when testing. Good luck!

#### Laundry list of reasons Common Core is the best form of education – increases creativity, depth and retention of knowledge, critical thinking, and collaboration. And, Common Core actually reverses the issues of previous education failures like NCLB – none of their media hype applies.

Long 13 – Cindy Long, Senior Writer and Media Specialist at National Education Association, Masters in nonfiction and creative writing from Johns Hopkins University, 2013 (“Six Ways the Common Core is Good For Students”, National Education Association Today, May 10, Available Online at http://neatoday.org/2013/05/10/six-ways-the-common-core-is-good-for-students-2/, accessed 7/3/15, KM)

As the Common Core debate heats up, we’ve heard a lot from policy makers, politicians, and even TV talk show hosts about the challenges posed by the new standards and whether they’ll help or hurt education. With all the chatter, the voices of the professionals who are actually responsible for implementing the Common Core have been all but drowned out in the mainstream media. To get their perspective, NEA Today convened a panel of educators from around the country who were attending NEA’s Common Core Working Group in Denver, Colorado – a strategy- and ideas-sharing meeting of education professionals from the 46 states who have adopted Common Core. (Find out more about NEA’s involvement in the Common Core.) They told us there’s a lot of anxiety among educators about the Common Core, and a lot of unanswered questions. How do we best implement them? How do we train more teachers? How do we help students master the new content? And what about testing? But despite these significant hurdles, the overwhelming consensus of the educators we heard from is that the Common Core will ultimately be good for students and education. Read on for six reasons why. 1. Common Core Puts Creativity Back in the Classroom “I have problems and hands-on activities that I like my students to experience to help them understand a concept or relationship,” says Cambridge, Massachusetts, high school math teacher Peter Mili. One of his classic activities is taking a rectangular piece of cardboard and asking the students to cut from each corner to make a box. They learn that different sized boxes need different lengths in cuts, and then they fill the boxes with popcorn and measure how much each box can hold. “I haven’t been able to do that in years because of the push to cover so many things. Time is tight, especially because of all the benchmarks and high-stakes testing,” Mili says. “So I’ve had to put the fun, creative activities aside to work on drill and skill. But the Common Core streamlines content, and with less to cover, I can enrich the experience, which gives my students a greater understanding.” Mili says a lot of teachers have fun, creative activities stuffed into their closets or desk drawers because they haven’t had the time to use them in the era of NCLB tests and curriculum. He thinks the Common Core will allow those activities to again see the light of day. That’s because the Common Core State Standards are just that — standards and not a prescribed curriculum. They may tell educators what students should be able to do by the end of a grade or course, but it’s up to the educators to figure out how to deliver the instruction. 2. Common Core Gives Students a Deep Dive When students can explore a concept and really immerse themselves in that content, they emerge with a full understanding that lasts well beyond testing season, says Kisha Davis-Caldwell, a fourth-grade teacher at a Maryland Title 1 elementary school. “I’ve been faced with the challenge of having to teach roughly 100 math topics over the course of a single year,” says Davis-Caldwell. “The Common Core takes this smorgasbord of topics and removes things from the plate, allowing me to focus on key topics we know will form a clear and a consistent foundation for students.” Davis-Caldwell’s students used to skim the surface of most mathematical topics, working on them for just a day or two before moving on to the next, whether they’d mastered the first concept or not. “Students would go to the next concept frustrated, losing confidence and losing ground in the long haul,” she says. “The Common Core allows students to stay on a topic and not only dive deeply into it, but also be able to understand and apply the knowledge to everyday life.” 3. Common Core Ratchets up Rigor The CCSS requires students to take part in their learning and to think more critically about content, as opposed to simply regurgitating back what their teachers feed them, says Kathy Powers, who teaches fifth- and sixth-grade English Language Arts in Conway, Arkansas. One way Powers says the standards ratchet up the rigor is by requiring more nonfiction texts to be included in lessons on works of fiction, and vice versa. She uses Abraham Lincoln as an example. A lesson could start with “O Captain! My Captain!”, the extended metaphor poem written by Walt Whitman about the death of Lincoln, and incorporate the historical novel Assassin, which includes a fictional character in the plot. Then she’d follow that with the nonfiction work, Chasing Lincoln’s Killer, and have students also look at newspaper clippings from the time. “Or if we’re working on narrative writing, I can have them read The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and ask them not to just absorb the story, but also to evaluate C.S. Lewis as a writer, and then to try to write a piece of narrative in the style of C.S. Lewis,” she says. “In the past we’d ask them to simply write a story. But this requires more critical thinking, and this kind of increased rigor will make students more competitive on a global level.” 4. Common Core is Collaborative The Common Core allows educators to take ownership of the curriculum — it puts it back into the hands of teachers, who know what information is best for students and how best to deliver that information. “Not only does it integrate instruction with other disciplines, like English and social studies, or literacy, math, and science, the common standards will allow us to crowd source our knowledge and experience,” says Kathy Powers of Arkansas. Kisha Davis-Caldwell agrees. “The Common Core will create opportunities to share resources and create common resources,” she says. “We can discuss what isn’t working and use our voices collectively. That way we can all be part of the conversation about assessment of teaching, learning, and the standards themselves.” Peter Mili says the key word to focus on is “common.” He believes there is far too much academic variability from state to state and not enough collaboration. With the Common Core State Standards, “the good things that may be happening in Alabama can be shared and found useful to educators in Arizona because they are working on the same topics.” 5. Common Core Advances Equity Cheryl Mosier, an Earth Science teacher from Colorado, says she’s most excited about the Common Core because it’ll be a challenge for all students, not just the high achieving students, which Mosier and her colleagues say will go a long way to closing achievement and opportunity gaps for poor and minority children. If students from all parts of the country — affluent, rural, low-income or urban — are being held to the same rigorous standards, it promotes equity in the quality of education and the level of achievement gained. “With the Common Core, we’re not going to have pockets of really high performing kids in one area compared to another area where kids aren’t working on the same level,” she says “Everybody is going to have a high bar to meet, but it’s a bar that can be met with support from – and for — all teachers.” Davis-Caldwell’s Title 1 school is in a Washington, D.C., suburb. In the D.C. metro area, like in other areas in and around our nation’s cities, there is a high rate of mobility among the poorest residents. Students regularly move from town to town, county to county, or even state to state – often in the middle of the school year. There has been no alignment from state to state on what’s being taught, so when a fourth-grade student learning geometry and fractions in the first quarter of the school year suddenly moves to Kansas in the second quarter, he may have entirely different lessons to learn and be tested on. It also helps teachers better serve their students, says Davis-Caldwell. When teachers in one grade level focus consistently and comprehensively on the most critical and fundamental concepts, their students move on to the next grade level able to build on that solid foundation rather than reviewing what should have been learned in the previous grade. 6. Common Core Gets Kids College Ready “One of the broad goals is that the increased rigor of the Common Core will help everyone become college and/or career ready,” says Peter Mili. Preparing kids for college and careers will appeal widely to parents and the community, especially in a struggling economy where only 31 percent of eleventh graders were considered “college ready,” according to a recent ACT study. If a student who was taught how to think critically and how to read texts for information and analysis can explain the premise behind a mathematical thesis, she’ll have options and opportunities, Mili says. Students with that kind of education will be able to decide what kind of career path to follow or whether they want to attend a university or any kind of school because they were prepared to do a higher level of work that is expected in our society and our economy. Student success is the outcome every education professional works so tirelessly toward, and the Common Core will help them get there if it’s implemented well, according to the panel of educators. “Yes, it’s an extra workload as a teacher, and it’s difficult…but it’s for the betterment of the students,” says Davis-Caldwell. “And if we keep that our focus, I don’t see why we can’t be successful.”

#### Common Core makes education last – it increases content, depth, and applicability of knowledge – this gives US students a competitive edge – don’t listen to their unwarranted pessimism.

Caret 14 – Robert Caret, chancellor of the University System of Maryland, former President of the University of Massachusetts, San Jose State University, and Towson University. Caret serves on the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education (ACE), the primary coordinating and advocacy body for all of the nation's colleges and universities, 2014 (“How the Common Core Will Keep the U.S. Education System Competitive”, The Huffington Post, June 4, Available Online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-l-caret/how-the-common-core-will-\_b\_5446496.html, accessed 7/2/15)

It is a partnership that makes perfect sense, higher education leaders joining with their K-12 counterparts and others to work to create a national set of standards that would ensure that young people leave school armed with the knowledge they need to be successful in college, work and life. It is an effort that everyone has a stake in -- and while the progress made to date has been conspicuous, so too are the risks unless we remain vigilant and energetic. Developed five years ago at the behest of governors and state education officials, Common Core seeks to create a shared academic vocabulary for the young people of America. It asserts that if you graduate from a high school in the United States, you should depart with a diploma and a certain body of knowledge. It argues that there are things that you need to know to succeed in a world that seems to grow more challenging and complex by the day. The Common Core is the first concerted effort by states across the country to analyze what works, to establish the rough framework for a locally-created curriculum and to implement rigorous assessments at crucial crossroads in the journey from kindergarten to 12th grade. These standards were created from a thoughtful analysis of what works in states like Massachusetts and push students to think creatively, understand thought processes and develop much better writing skills. What the Common Core is not is yet another device where teachers are forced to prepare students not for college or careers -- but to be good test-takers. Instead, it is aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of what is learned. And don't listen to naysayers who complain that the Common Core foists a one-size-fits-all education on our schools: Each school, and teacher, creates an appropriate curriculum within the guiding framework of the Common Core. While Massachusetts is often at the head of the class, clearly, our nation as a whole needs to do a better job of preparing students for college, for careers and for the demands of an internationally competitive economy. Our students' reading skills have fallen to 14th in the world, and we are a dismal 25th in math skills. Crucially, in science, where we once led the world and where the keys to climate change, economic growth and medicine will be found, the Broad Foundation analysis finds us now in 17th place. It is simply not acceptable. The Common Core standards enjoy significant support across the nation, but there are opponents -- and given the tenacity of the opposition and the stakes of the debate, many higher education leaders are, for the first time, joining together to support the standards in an organized and energetic way. To date, 44 states, the District of Columbia and four territories have voluntarily adopted and are moving forward with the Common Core. But, recent headlines about the Common Core have been distressing, centering on calls by some parents and lawmakers to make the standards less challenging and the assessments easier to pass. Is this really how little we think of our students? Is this how we intend to take back our spot at the top of global rankings, by lowering the bar? Higher education leaders and organizations from across the nation have formed a coalition called Higher Ed for Higher Standards, and have done so believing that we should no longer be content to watch this this issue from the sidelines, much less from above in the ivory tower. Students who arrive at our doors prepared remain in school and graduate. In fact, they tend to graduate on time, and in so doing, accrue less debt. In the world of public higher education, on-time graduation is as welcomed as a summer breeze, as it saves everyone money, the student and the state. As a nation, we must fend off those who would come forward with tired top-down, one-size-fits-all arguments and give our young people the tools they need to compete and succeed in the real world.

### Common Core Improves Education – Math & Science

#### Common core is good for Math: teaches students how to learn and evaluate STEM.

French 14 ­– Rose French, A staff writer for the Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC). The AJC is a national newspaper based in Atlanta. “In your schools; Today’s math lessons tied to tomorrow jobs.”

State educators say the new Common Core standards --- controversial among some, who criticize them as a federal intrusion in schools --- should help buoy math performance. Over the past decade, Georgia has followed a pattern similar to other states: moving from a math curriculum that touched a number of topics toward a more conceptual approach, first under Georgia Performance Standards, now Common Core. Some critics complain the changing curriculum has contributed to Georgia's problems.

Under Common Core math, teachers focus on fewer topics and explore them more deeply instead of teaching numerous math topics and repeating them from grade to grade because students don't fully grasp them.

"We teach fractions starting in third grade, and we teach them every single year through eighth grade," said Morgan Polikoff, assistant professor of education at the University of Southern California, who's written extensively about U.S. math education. "And yet at the end of eighth grade, students still don't know fractions."

"I think in other countries ... they introduce them using multiple representations, and because they help students understand what a fraction is early on, then they don't have to cover it for five or six grades."

Common Core attempts to mimic results in higher-achieving countries such as Singapore and South Korea, where math is thought of as something that must be learned through practice and hard work.

In math classrooms in Asia, a teacher primarily leads the teaching of math, unlike in the U.S., where students often are divided into groups or practice at their desks --- unaided by teachers. School days are typically longer in Asian countries, and a greater proportion of the time is spent on math.

Thurston Domina, a sociologist of education professor at University of California Irvine, says race, class and other socioeconomic factors can influence how students perform.

So, too, can the cultural attitude in the U.S. "So kids will tell you, 'I'm good at math' or 'I'm not good at math.' And that's not good for anybody," Domina said. "The culture around math is particularly unhealthy in this country."

#### [ this card is really good] Common core is good for Math education ­– prefer our author who is a mathematician.

Friedberg 14 – Solomon Friedberg is the James P. McIntyre Professor of Mathematics and Chair of the Department of Mathematics.. Ph.D. University of Chicago, 1982, M.S. University of Chicago, 1979,B.A. Summa cum Laude, University of California, San Diego, 1978. 2014. “Common Core math is not fuzzy: Column” USA TODAY, Available at: http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/09/15/common-core-math-education-standards-fluency-column/15693531/, Accessed 7-16-2015

As a professional mathematician, I'm as firmly against fuzzy math as they come. Common Core lays the foundation for students to have a better grasp of mathematical concepts than present standards and sets higher expectations for teaching and learning.

If that doesn't sound fuzzy, there's a simple reason: It isn't.

To appreciate the changes under way, and perhaps to understand the anxiety provoked by Common Core, it's helpful to look at math before the core.

Too often, it has been "plug and chug" math. In this approach, math is a bunch of memorized rules that don't make much sense. Follow the rules, and you will get the right answer. Do something different, and you're likely to get it wrong. "Analytical thinking" consists of figuring out which rule to apply. There is limited need for originality, explanations, or even genuine understanding. Learning enough rules will allow you to solve the problems you are given. Do this for enough years, and you may firmly believe that this is what mathematics actually is. If your kids are asked to do something different, you may be up in arms.

Math as rules starts early. Kids learn in elementary school that you can "add a zero to multiply by ten." And it's true, 237 x 10 = 2370. Never mind why. But then when kids learn decimals, the rule fails: 2.37 x 10 is not 2.370. One approach is to simply add another rule. But that's not the best way.

Common Core saves us from plug-and-chug. In fact, math is based on a collection of ideas that do make sense. The rules come from the ideas. Common Core asks students to learn math this way, with both computational fluency and understanding of the ideas.

Learning math this way leads to deeper understanding, obviates the need for endless rule-memorizing and provides the intellectual flexibility to apply math in new situations, ones for which the rules need to be adapted. (It's also a lot more fun.) Combining computational fluency with understanding makes for problem solvers who can genuinely use their math. This is what businesses want and what is necessary to use math in a quantitative discipline.

Here is what good math learning produces: Students who can compute correctly and wisely, choosing the best way to do a given computation; students who can explain what they are doing when they solve a problem or use math to analyze a situation; and students who have the flexibility and understanding to find the best approach to a new problem.

Common Core promotes this. It systematically and coherently specifies the topics and connections needed for math to make sense, and promotes both understanding and accuracy.

No revolution

This doesn't sound revolutionary because it's not. Common Core is a list of topics everyone knows we should teach. It doesn't tell teachers how to teach them (though it does ask that they teach them coherently, with understanding). It is also not a test, not a curriculum, not a set of homework problems, not a federal mandate and not a teacher evaluation tool.

But you wouldn't know it from some of the criticisms directed at it. It lays out the topics for students, grade by grade. The rest is up to the teachers, school districts and state boards.

The higher expectations laid out by the Core have been endorsed by every major mathematical society president, including the American Mathematical Society and the American Statistical Association. They called the Common Core State Standards an "auspicious advance in mathematics education."

Of course, the core will do best if parents can support their children in reaching these higher goals. Websites such as Khan Academy and Illustrative Mathematics have incorporated the standards and show best practices and well-crafted math problems.

There is no doubt that the new standards are more rigorous. They will require more of our students, our teachers and our parents. Knowing what you are doing, instead of just knowing a set of rules, is the essential foundation for applying math to the real world.

That's not fuzzy. It is smart.

#### STEM education is key to global competitiveness

The Hill 13 – The Hill, a Pulitzer prize winning news blog based out of Washington DC. Primarily used for political commentary and analysis. 2015 "STEM fund key to U.S. global competitiveness", TheHill Blog. Available at: http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/305061-stem-fund-key-to-us-global-competitiveness, Accessed 7-16-2015

Businesses, education groups and advocacy organizations have been following the progress of the legislation, but every state and virtually every community has a vested interest in the outcome as well. Last week in Delaware, Gov. Jack Markell and the state’s STEM Council issued their second annual report on STEM education in Delaware schools.

One of the report’s findings illustrates a challenge we face nationally – for every unemployed person in Delaware, there are 3.8 open jobs in STEM fields. And for every non-STEM job there are 1.7 people in the state

It isn’t advanced math, but for anyone struggling with the equation, Gov. Markell summed it up neatly: “If you’re in the STEM fields, take your pick. If you’re not in the STEM fields, join the line. To succeed in the brave new world, my top priority is making sure our education system prepares our students.”

The governor may have oversimplified the state of affairs for effect, but his priorities are no different from those of the nation’s elected leaders, and those common priorities likely explain why the national STEM education fund enjoys bipartisan support in Congress.

The STEM fund, in the hopes of its supporters in Congress, business and among education advocates, will help provide a long-term solution to the nation’s STEM jobs gap by strengthening our STEM education pipeline. A stark demonstration of the depth of the crisis appeared in early April when the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services opened the application window for H-1B visas, which companies use to hire foreign high-skill workers to fill vacant positions in the U.S. The visas were exhausted within five days; the previous year, it took 10 weeks to meet the demand for those visas.

And while the nation does not currently produce enough workers trained in STEM fields, the problem if not addressed will continue to worsen, affecting U.S. global competitiveness and the nation’s standing as a leader in innovation. One study projects that future STEM jobs will be in high demand, but also notes that technological changes in other occupations means that other fields will also be recruiting STEM talent.

“STEM occupations will grow far more quickly than the economy as a whole (17 percent versus 10 percent), and will be the second-fastest growing occupational cluster, after Healthcare occupations,” according to a report from Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce.

The researchers also project 2.4 million jobs openings in STEM fields by 2018, with 1.1 million new jobs and 1.3 million openings created by workers who leave the workforce.

The report says: “America’s economic success will be driven by our ability to maintain a competitive advantage in technology and knowledge based industries. A commitment to STEM education funding within immigration reform efforts now underway will help ensure that we produce the skilled workers we need for the future. From Dover to Dubuque, every community and school system in the country has a vested interest in meeting this challenge.”

#### Proper STEM education is key to global competitiveness

Gordon 14 ­– lawyer and former U.S. Representative for Tennessee's 6th congressional district, serving from 1985 until 2011. He was Chairman of the House Committee on Science and Technology from 2007 until 2011. He graduated cum laude from Middle Tennessee State University in 1971, where he was student body president, and earned a law degree from the University of Tennessee in 1973. 2014, "STEM Education: Key to America’s Global Competitiveness", USA Science and Engineering Festival: The Blog, Available at: http://scienceblogs.com/usasciencefestival/2014/04/19/stem-education-key-to-americas-global-competitiveness/, Accessed 7-16-2015

Our nation has a long and proud history as a global leader in the development of technological breakthroughs and the development of revolutionary products that change and save lives around the world. In recent years, however, fewer young Americans are entering fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and as a result, our global competitiveness is in jeopardy. For the past six years, the majority of patents issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office have been awarded to international owners, and fewer American students are pursuing advanced science degrees and the World Economic Forum ranks the United States 52nd in quality of math and science education. We can and must do better.

At the same time, STEM occupations are poised to grow more quickly in the future than the economy as a whole. More than half of our nation’s economic growth since World War II can be attributed to development and adoption of new technologies and this area holds the path toward sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the next 50 years. A report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the workforce projected 2.4 million job openings in STEM fields by 2018. Only by developing a generation of workers prepared for those opportunities can America secure its continued global competitiveness.

#### [insert generic competitiveness impact]

### Common Core Improves Educational Competitiveness

#### First, Common Core is improving education now — rigorous standards allow US students to compete globally.

Garland 14 – Sarah Garland, Executive editor of The Hechinger Report, former Spencer Fellow in Education Reporting at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Joint master’s degree in journalism and Latin American studies from New York University, 2014 (“US education: How we got where we are today”, Christian Science Monitor, August 17, Available Online at http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2014/0817/US-education-How-we-got-where-we-are-today, accessed 7/6/15, KM)

In many ways, the report succeeded: It brought a revolution to American public education. The report laid the groundwork for a movement bent on exploding the traditional way of doing things at relics like Curtis High School, where murals honoring graduates who died in the world wars flank banners celebrating sports championships. Now, the landscape of schools looks very different from the way it did three decades ago. Boston Collegiate, a charter school unfettered by teacher union rules and district red tape, is one of the new generation of schools spawned by the report that offer alternatives to – and in some cases replace – older neighborhood institutions such as Curtis. The charter school, founded in 1998 in South Boston, has a single-minded mission to send each of its graduates – most of them low-income students – to college. To make that happen, Boston Collegiate students attend Saturday classes and late afternoon tutoring and homework hours, teachers undergo intensive annual evaluations and can be fired at will, and educators have embraced standards shared by schools across the nation. The school prides itself on the high achievement of its students, including top scores on state standardized tests. At Boston Collegiate, most of the school leaders were students themselves when “A Nation at Risk” was issued. Yet in many ways, the school embodies the report’s definition of excellence as pushing students to reach the “boundary of individual ability.” On an afternoon near the end of school in June, Nairobi Fernandez, an outgoing and confident junior, was discussing her college plans. After having done an internship in the labor and delivery ward at a local hospital, she wants to become a midwife. But she has struggled to keep up her grades, so she said she was thinking of enrolling in community college instead of a four-year institution. Sarah Muncey, the school’s director of operations, interjected. Nairobi should not settle for community college, Ms. Muncey told her. She should at least apply to a four-year school. According to Boston Collegiate, 100 percent of its students not only apply to a four-year college, but are accepted. “Our mission is to prepare students for college,” says Shannah Varón, executive director of the school. “We’re focused on whatever it takes to get them there.” Educators and education advocates from across the political spectrum – teachers unions and their critics alike – praise this outcome of “A Nation at Risk.” Expectations for students have increased, and confronting the achievement gap between haves and have-nots has become a priority in education reform. • • • Principal Curtis is among those who link this shift back to “A Nation at Risk.” Common Core is an ideal example of how expectations are rising, and she’s thrilled to witness her teachers encouraging students to think deeper and more critically. “I fundamentally agree with the premise of standards, and the Common Core standards,” she says, noting that her school has adopted the rigorous International Baccalaureate program for one of the academic “houses” students join. The curriculum is based on tough standards that call for critical thinking and creative problem-solving and have helped boost the school to new levels of success, she says. Curtis High has appeared on lists of America’s best high schools, and despite a high rate of poverty – 72 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches – the graduation rate mirrors that of the nation as a whole, about 80 percent.

#### Second, Common Core is the key internal link to economic competitiveness — the standards improve quality of education while maintaining educational flexibility.

Bush 13 – Allie Bush, public policy coordinator for the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, focusing on education and tax issues. Bush previously worked in the Michigan House of Representatives as a policy advisor for the House Republican Policy Office. She holds a master’s of public administration from Grand Valley State University, 2013 (“Common Core: Giving students a competitive advantage”, mLive, September 5, Available Online at http://www.mlive.com/opinion/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2013/09/common\_core\_giving\_students\_a.html, accessed 7/2/15, KM)

Today’s competitive and global economy requires education standards that reflect the changing realities of tomorrow’s workplace. Companies across the state and here in West Michigan look worldwide for resources and individuals to create value and deliver high-quality products and services. Regardless of business size, employers are constantly seeking the best talent. This means students need every tool and opportunity to maximize their potential. It is critical that our approach to education reflects the skills that employers are seeking. Currently in Michigan, 68 percent of third graders read proficiently, 76 percent are graduating high school, and only 20 percent of high school graduates are considered to be career- or college-ready. These statistics are a call to action. In response, Michigan adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 and is expected to fully implement the standards by the 2014-2015 school year. Common Core has been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia, and was developed to provide a clear set of K-12 standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. These standards improve upon Michigan’s previous standards and empower local schools and educators to develop their own curriculum and lesson plans to best meet the needs of their students. Over the last three years, Michigan school districts and educators have spent a significant amount of time and resources preparing, developing and implementing the new standards. Unfortunately, there are efforts in the Michigan Legislature to retreat from Common Core. Unfounded criticism has stalled the success of this program while the legislature determines whether or not to continue funding. Opposition to the implementation of Common Core is based on several misconceptions. Some argue it will lead to federal takeover of the public education system. However, Common Core was not developed or mandated by the federal government. The State adopted standards to promote equality by ensuring all students have the same goals. For families that must relocate, Common Core creates a consistent educational experience where students can adjust quickly, pick up where they left off, and remain competitive with their peers. Common Core creates a level of assurance regarding the value of a high school diploma for students, employers and higher education institutions. Opponents have also expressed concern that Common Core will “dumb down” Michigan’s standards or create a “one-size-fits-all” program. This is not the case. Common Core does not direct curriculum, but sets standards for achievement that will better prepare students for the future. Educators will continue to have the flexibility to create individualized lesson plans and may utilize non-traditional courses to help students apply their lessons to situations they will encounter after high school. If we are to remain competitive with the 21st century global economy, our students and their families deserve every opportunity to succeed. The Common Core State Standards are a piece of the larger puzzle to help ensure our children can grow and prosper. On behalf of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, we urge the legislature to continue with the implementation of Common Core.

Duncan 10 – Arne Duncan is an American education administrator who has been United States Secretary of Education since 2009, 2010 (“The Vision of Education Reform in the United States: Secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),” Paris, France, Department of Education, 11-4-2010, available online via http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/vision-education-reform-united-states-secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-united-nations-educational-scientific-and-cultural-organization-unesco-paris-france, accessed on 7-8-2015)//CM

I've said that America is now in the midst of a "quiet revolution" in school reform. And this is very much a revolution driven by leaders in statehouses, state school superintendents, local lawmakers, district leaders, union heads, school boards, parents, principals, and teachers. To cite just one example, the department's Race to the Top Program challenged states to craft concrete, comprehensive plans for reforming their education systems. The response was nothing less than extraordinary. Forty-six states submitted applications—and the competition drove a national conversation about education reform. Thirty-two states changed specific laws that posed barriers to innovation. And even states that did not win awards now have a state roadmap for reform hammered out. The i3 program also had a phenomenal response. The $650 million i3 fund offered support to school districts, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education to scale-up promising practices. The department awarded 49 grants in the competition. But nearly 1,700 applicants applied—by far the largest number of applicants in a single competition in the Department's history. Our aim is not just to fund grantees each year, but to build a new culture of evidence-based decision-making for expanding successful reforms. I said earlier that the United States now has a unique opportunity to transform our education system in ways that will resonate for decades to come. Last year and this year, the federal government provided unprecedented funds to support education and reform. But the special window that America has had to drive reform is not because of the dollars, it's because of the courageous state and local leaders who have taken the lead in collaborating on problems that the experts said were too divisive to resolve. At the end of the day, I believe it is that courage, and not our resources, that will transform educational opportunity in our country. In March of 2009, President Obama called on the nation's governors and state school chiefs to "develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity." Virtually everyone thought the president was dreaming. But today, 37 states and the District of Columbia have already chosen to adopt the new state-crafted Common Core standards in math and English. Not studying it, not thinking about it, not issuing a white paper—they have actually done it. Over three-fourths of all U.S. public school students now reside in states that have voluntarily adopted higher, common college-ready standards that are internationally benchmarked. That is an absolute game-changer in a system which until now set 50 different goalposts for success. The second game-changer is that states have banded together in large consortia to develop a new generation of assessments aligned with the states' Common Core standards. In September, I announced the results of the department's $350 million Race to the Top assessment completion to design this next generation of assessments. Two state consortiums, which together cover 44 states and the District of Columbia, won awards. These new assessments will have much in common with the first-rate assessments now used in many high-performing countries outside the U.S. When these new assessments are in use in the 2014-15 school year, millions of U.S. schoolchildren, parents, and teachers will know, for the first time, if students truly are on-track for colleges and careers. For the first time, many teachers will have the assessments they have longed for—tests of critical thinking skills and complex learning tasks that are not just multiple-choice, fill-in-the-bubble tests of basic skills. So, in the end, transforming education is not just about raising expectations. It has to be about creating greater capacity at all levels of the system to implement reform. It has to be about results. Sir Michael Barber's book, Instruction to Deliver, reminds us that the unglamorous work of reform matters enormously. He urges us to ask five questions that are almost the opposite of the compliance-driven process of technical assistance that has prevailed at the U.S. Department of Education. His five, disarmingly simple questions are: What are you trying to do? How are you trying to do it? How do you know you are succeeding? If you're not succeeding, how will you change things? And last yet not least, how can we help you? Unfortunately, our department has historically asked a very different set of questions: Are program rules being followed? Are monies being spent as promised? We can never abandon our fiscal and compliance responsibilities. But we are committed to establishing a different relationship with the 50 states—one more focused on providing tailored support to improve student outcomes. We are trying to talk less—and listen more. I want to close by talking briefly—I promise to begin my listening shortly—about what the United States can learn from other nations and how cross-country collaboration can be of mutual benefit to the U.S. and other nations. The simple truth is that America has a great deal to learn from the educational practices of other countries. One of the most encouraging lessons of the PISA assessment is that high-achieving nations can significantly narrow achievement gaps and advance achievement nationwide—two important goals that the United States has so far failed to accomplish. Nations like Singapore, South Korea, and Finland are showing the way to building a topnotch teaching workforce, and ensuring that outstanding teachers instruct the most challenging students. At the same time, the U.S. has much to teach other nations. Our system of higher education is in many respects still without parallel. We have advanced data systems that we are constantly improving. And we have more high-performing schools that are showing how to close achievement gaps than ever before. I welcome this international dialogue, which is only beginning. In December, in Washington, I will join the OECD Secretary General for the global announcement of the 2009 PISA results. In March, we will be sponsoring an International Summit on the Teaching Profession. This event, in New York, will include education Ministers and leaders of national teachers' organizations from high-performing and rapidly-advancing countries, with a goal of sharing practices for developing a high-quality teaching profession. Ultimately, I believe the economic future of the United States rests not only on its ability to strengthen its education system but also on citizens in other nations raising their living standards. Thinking of the future as a contest among nations vying for larger pieces of a finite economic pie is a recipe for protectionism and global strife. Expanding educational attainment everywhere is the best way to grow the pie for all. In the United States, we know we do not have all the answers to our educational challenges. Yet not having all the answers cannot become an excuse for inaction. The urgent need to provide an excellent education for every child is a right that cannot be denied. We can't wait because our children can't wait. The time for change is now.

#### Common Core is key to US competitiveness — it improves our global rankings.

Fitzgerald 11 — Corey Fitzgerald, Training and Development Manager for Scientific Learning, an education company applying brain-based research to classroom curriculum, former high school AP Bio Teacher, 2011 (“Endorsing the Common Core State Standards Initiative,” Scientific Learning, May 26th, Available Online at <http://www.scilearn.com/blog/common-core-state-standards>, Accessed 06-29-2015)

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to provide a nationally consistent framework that will ready American students for success in college and in the global workforce. To date, 44 states have adopted the common core standards approach and numerous public and private business partners, including Scientific Learning, have endorsed this vision of consistence and clarity in our nation’s education system.

What’s important to recognize is that the Common Core State Standards Initiative is NOT a directive from the federal government. Each state voluntarily adopts the standards based on timelines and context within their state; this is key. The role of the federal government will be to support states as they begin to implement this approach by providing flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, accountability metrics and revise or align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from past initiatives. The outcome will be a more collaborative state- and federal-level relationship that will focus on employing the best practices and highest evidence-based outcomes from educational research across the country.

The goal of the Common Core is to provide educators with an exocentric understanding of what students are expected to learn, allowing them to identify the most effective strategies and modes of instruction that will help them excel in serving their students’ needs. Leading the effort are the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). Comprised of state leaders in conjunction with parents, teachers, school administrators, business partners and experts from across the country, they have developed a shared set of goals and expectations that will help our students succeed.

To ensure this process is collaborative, inclusive and rigorous, several working groups and committees have been formed to develop, write and validate the approach to implementing these common standards across the country. By aligning our country’s standards with other high achieving educational models and setting realistic goals, we will be better positioned to meet the real world expectations and prepare our nation’s students for college and career-oriented success beyond the K-12 classroom.

The importance of the Common Core State Standards Initiative continues to be viewed from many angles, although there are areas of uncertainty that have given rise to opposition. Of course, standards alone cannot improve the quality of our nation’s education system, but they do give educators a clearer vision for setting goals and expectations for their students. The standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will help teachers provide more consistent exposure to curriculum and meaningful instruction through opportunity-based learning and classroom experiences.

Students will no doubt benefit as our country continues to do the right things in calibrating the education system, promoting more frequent, intense and adaptive instruction to improve the way students learn and strengthen our rank among the top-performing nations in the world.

#### Common Core standards increase US economic competitiveness – increased academic rigor and clearly defined expectations give American students necessary skills to compete internationally.

Engler 13 – John Engler, former Michigan governor. Engler serves on the Board of Advisors of the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal, an educational organization, 2013 (“Common Core can make America competitive”, The Washington Times, July 22, Available Online at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/22/common-core-can-make-america-competitive/, accessed 7/2/15, KM)

In today’s global economy the old rules don’t apply. Students in Maryland no longer compete only with students in Virginia; now they compete with students in Helsinki, Toronto and Seoul — and they’re losing. U.S. students are falling behind their international peers in reading, math and science. But there’s hope — the state and local adoption of the Common Core State Standards provide the best opportunity in a generation for understanding the gap, reversing this decline and putting all students on the right path. The Common Core State Standards have the support of America’s business leaders, and these standards should have the support of any American who wants to ensure our country and our children are ready to compete in the 21st century global marketplace. Despite the fact that these standards are voluntary and were developed by America’s governors and state school superintendents, they have recently come under attack by parties who claim they are a federal government takeover of kindergarten through Grade 12 schools. These fears are not only misplaced, they threaten the strength of our economy. To remain competitive in the global marketplace, American companies need employees who can read, write, use mathematics and make well-reasoned decisions. Ideally, we would educate all of our students to succeed in innovative 21st century jobs that will require greater skills. Unfortunately, at present, we are not. Today, U.S. students rank 14th in reading, 17th in science and 25th in math when compared to their global peers on the most recent Program for International Student Assessment. The recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study data show that only 29 percent of U.S. eighth graders can correctly solve a basic fraction equation that 86 percent of students in South Korea can solve. I think U.S. eighth graders can match the performance of South Korean students if they know what is expected of them. The goal of the Common Core State Standards is to be very clear about those expectations. Some parents think poor student performance in reading, science and math is only an urban problem or a low-income issue. But a new, first-of-its-kind school-by-school comparison has demonstrated that the performance gap between American and foreign students is not isolated to low-income communities. The report, released by the education group America Achieves, shatters the myth that middle-class students in the United States are somehow better than other countries. The Common Core State Standards can help our students catch up to the rest of the world. The standards set more rigorous academic requirements in English language arts and mathematics. They were voluntarily adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia, and they would largely replace a patchwork of inconsistent, often weak or sometimes non-existent academic standards in America’s 7,000 local school districts. They build on the work of other states, such as Massachusetts and Minnesota, and top-performing countries that perform well on international tests. If our students are unable to keep up with their global peers, institutions — from our military to our manufacturing sector — will erode. Without a thriving economy and high-paying jobs, American families will struggle to make ends meet and provide the future security for successive generations that we have come to take for granted. It is for these reasons that Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs of leading U.S. companies, is committed to the Common Core State Standards and their implementation. Our members’ companies operate in an increasingly interconnected global economy where competitors transcend international borders, not merely neighboring state lines. It’s not good enough if only 29 percent of our students can correctly solve a basic math equation. We need to do better to ensure our students are prepared to succeed in college or the workplace. From the establishment of a public education system to the creation of the first GI bill, the United States has long recognized the benefits a well-educated work force confers on our society. The Common Core State Standards extend that commitment and inform America’s students, teachers and parents about what we need to know and when. I am confident when we know what is required, we will meet that challenge and secure our future.

#### Leaving high school, American students aren’t prepared for higher education or the international job market – remedial courses in college prove. Common Core provides students with critical thinking, writing, and research skills that increase competition.

Kirwan et al 14 – William Kirwan, former Chancellor Emeritus of the University System of Maryland and President of the University of Maryland, College Park, and Ohio State University. He is a nationally recognized authority on critical issues in higher education. Timothy P. White, chancellor of the California State University. He previously was the chancellor of the Riverside campus of the University of California. White holds a PhD from UC Berkeley. Nancy Zimpher, educator, state university leader, and Chancellor of the State University of New York. She was formerly a dean and professor of education at Ohio State University, Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and President of the University of Cincinnati, 2014 (“Use the Common Core. Use It Widely. Use It Well.”, The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 10, Available Online via Lexis, accessed 7/2/15, KM)

Many of us in higher education have observed an increasing number of students arriving at our doorstep not fully prepared to pursue a college degree. This is our collective problem as a nation. Our country, and our local communities, can ill afford to turn our backs on these prospective students and their families. Consequently, higher education has invested billions of public dollars every year in so-called remedial education to prepare students for basic mathematics and writing. This is not sustainable. There has to be a better way. Fortunately, there's a solution that most states and many others are pursuing: the Common Core State Standards. This effort holds tremendous promise, but it has recently become the subject of a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding. To show our support for Common Core, the three of us are joining more than 200 other postsecondary leaders across the country to start a coalition called Higher Ed for Higher Standards. We invite our fellow university chancellors, college presidents, and others in academia to learn more about these standards and to join us in this effort to preserve them. The Common Core was developed in 2009 through a collective effort by educators and others across the country. The concept was simple: Start with our expectations for incoming students-the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in first-year college courses and job-training programs-and back down through the grades so that students who meet standards in elementary, middle, and high school will be college- and career-ready when they reach our campuses. Forty-five states voluntarily adopted these benchmarks in mathematics, writing, and literacy. Most faculty members who have been involved with the Common Core give the standards very high marks. They are significantly stronger than states' previous K-12 standards, with a heavier emphasis on the skills in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, writing, and research that we value so much in higher education. The business community shares that view: Both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable have come out strongly in favor of Common Core because of the promise it holds for strengthening economic competitiveness. Elementary- and secondary-school teachers are also supportive. Over three-quarters of teachers think the standards reflect the right expectations and will challenge them to improve their instruction in ways that will benefit their students. Sadly, despite the strong support from educators and business, the standards have become a lightning rod in state legislatures across the nation. Critics on the right argue the federal government has forced these new standards on the states; critics on the left contend that the standards are being put in place too quickly. The reality? Neither claim is true. The standards were developed by teachers, college faculty members, employers, and others at the request of governors and state education commissioners. The federal government wasn't involved in the development at all. And when it comes to implementation, most states rolled out the standards two to three years before new assessments would be given to measure student learning. So while there is a legitimate debate to be had about how quickly to attach consequences to the assessments, it's not accurate to say they have been put into effect too fast, and it's not fair to slow the process when children's futures are at stake. As university leaders, we cannot sit by and watch an important reform with the promise to dramatically improve college readiness get stopped in its tracks because of political jockeying. It's time that we in higher education make our voices heard. Think about what's at stake. Nationwide, 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges and 20 percent of those who enroll in four-year institutions need to take remedial courses. To make matters worse, of these students, only 17 percent will ever complete degrees or certificates. Those statistics are deeply troubling to all of us. While our systems are working hard to re-engineer their remedial approaches, with some measure of success, there is no possibility of matching the results that will be achieved by having students who enter our institutions ready for college. This is also an economic issue: Colleges spend $7-billion a year on remedial courses for their students, while the students spend an estimated $3-billion or more annually to take those courses. Imagine what we could do with those resources if students arrived on campuses better prepared. When elementary and secondary schools use the Common Core standards well, it will help close the preparation gap and set students on the path to prosperity. But the standards themselves are not enough. States must also develop new assessments capable of measuring the standards. Otherwise, teachers and parents won't have the information they need to support student learning, and we at the postsecondary level won't have meaningful information about student readiness for college-level work. The truth is, most states' current high-school tests are not rigorous enough to provide us this information, and so we in higher education often ignore them. The efforts under way by two consortia of states to build new assessments aligned with the Common Core have great potential. Our states are involved in these consortia-the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium-and faculty members from our institutions have been helping to shape the tests that students will take in high school. But here again, politics threatens to undo this important work. In some parts of the country, legislators are considering pulling their states out of these new assessments. States that go back to the old tests or take shortcuts in developing new ones will be throwing away a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve a deficient system and create a more meaningful, coordinated one. It's time for all of us in higher education to refocus this conversation on where it should have been all along: improving the preparation of students for the world that awaits them after high school. If we don't, states risk losing years of excellent work by thousands of educators and setting back student progress for the foreseeable future, which will further jeopardize the country's competitive position in the world economy.

#### Education promotes global competitiveness, power, and a more productive world

Duncan 10 – Arne Duncan is an American education administrator who has been United States Secretary of Education since 2009, 2010 (“The Vision of Education Reform in the United States: Secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),” Paris, France, Department of Education, 11-4-2010, available online via http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/vision-education-reform-united-states-secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-united-nations-educational-scientific-and-cultural-organization-unesco-paris-france, accessed on 7-8-2015)//CM

It is an absolute honor to address UNESCO. During the last 65 years, UNESCO has done so much to advance the cause of education and gender equity, alleviate poverty, and promote peace. When UNESCO was founded in 1945, much of Europe, Russia, and Japan lay in ruin. The promise of universal education was then a lonely beacon—a light to guide the way to peace and the rebuilding of nations across the globe. Today, the world is no longer recovering from a tragic global war. Yet the international community faces a crisis of a different sort, the global economic crisis. And education is still the beacon lighting the path forward—perhaps more so today than ever before. Education is still the key to eliminating gender inequities, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity. I want to provide two overarching messages today about America's efforts to boost educational attainment and achievement. First, the Obama administration has an ambitious and unified theory of action that propels our agenda. The challenge of transforming education in America cannot be met by quick-fix solutions or isolated reforms. It can only be accomplished with a clear, coherent, and coordinated vision of reform. Second, while America must improve its stagnant educational and economic performance, President Obama and I reject the protectionist Cold War-era assumption that improving economic competitiveness is somehow a zero-sum game, with one nation's gain being another country's loss. I want to make the case to you today that enhancing educational attainment and economic viability, both at home and abroad, is really more of a win-win game; it is an opportunity to grow the economic pie, instead of carve it up. As President Obama said in his speech to the Muslim world in Cairo last year, "Any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail." There is so much that the United States has to learn from nations with high-performing education systems. And there is so much that America can share from its experience to the mutual benefit of nations confronting similar educational challenges. I am convinced that the U.S. education system now has an unprecedented opportunity to get dramatically better. Nothing—nothing—is more important in the long-run to American prosperity than boosting the skills and attainment of the nation's students. In the United States, we feel an economic and moral imperative to challenge the status quo. Closing the achievement gap and closing the opportunity gap is the civil rights issue of our generation. One quarter of U.S. high school students drop out or fail to graduate on time. Almost one million students leave our schools for the streets each year. That is economically unsustainable and morally unacceptable. One of the more unusual and sobering press conferences I participated in last year was the release of a report by a group of top retired generals and admirals. Here was the stunning conclusion of their report: 75 percent of young Americans, between the ages of 17 to 24, are unable to enlist in the military today because they have failed to graduate from high school, have a criminal record, or are physically unfit. Now, everyone here today knows that education is taking on more and more importance around the globe. In the last decade, international competition in higher education and the job market has grown dramatically. As the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman famously pointed out, the world economy has indeed "flattened." Companies now digitize, automate, and outsource work to the most competitive individuals, companies, and countries. In the knowledge economy, opportunities to land a good job are vanishing fast for young workers who drop out of school or fail to get college experience. That is why President Obama often says that the nation that "out-educates us today is going to out-compete us tomorrow." Yet there is also a paradox at the heart of America's efforts to bolster international competitiveness. To succeed in the global economy, the United States, just like other nations, will have to become both more economically competitive and more collaborative. In the information age, more international competition has spawned more international collaboration. Today, education is a global public good unconstrained by national boundaries. In the United States, for example, concerns are sometimes raised about the large number of foreign-born students earning masters and doctorates in science and engineering fields. Immigrants now constitute nearly half of America's PhD scientists and engineers, even though they constitute only 12 percent of the workforce overall. These foreign-born students more often return to the country of origin than in the past. But their scientific skills and entrepreneurship strengthen not only their native economy but also stimulate innovation and new markets that can help boost the U.S. economy. The same borderless nature of innovation and ideas is evident when foreign-born students remain in America. Immigrants to the U.S. started a quarter of all engineering and technology companies from 1995 and 2005, including half of the start-ups in Silicon Valley, our high-tech capital. Sergey Brin, Google's co-founder, was born in Moscow but educated in the United States. Google is now used throughout the globe to gather information and advance knowledge. The brain drain, in short, has become the brain gain. It is no surprise that economic interdependence brings new global challenges and educational demands. The United States cannot, acting by itself, dramatically reduce poverty and disease or develop sustainable sources of energy. America alone cannot combat terrorism or curb climate change. To succeed, we must collaborate with other countries. Those new partnerships require American students to develop better critical thinking abilities, cross-cultural understanding, and facility in multiple languages. They also will require U.S. students to strengthen their skills in science, technology, engineering, and math—the STEM fields that anchor much of our innovation in the global economy. These new partnerships must also inspire students to take a bigger and deeper view of their civic obligations—not only to their countries of origin but to the betterment of the global community. A just and socially responsible society must also be anchored in civic engagement for the public good. In our view, the United States will be better off, in comparative terms, if we lead the world in educational attainment, rather than lagging behind. A generation ago, America did in fact lead the world in college attainment. But today among young adults, the U.S. is tied for ninth. That is why President Obama has set a goal that America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, a decade from now. Yet even as the United States works to strengthen its educational system, it is important to remember that advancing educational attainment and achievement everywhere brings benefits not just to the U.S. but around the globe. In the knowledge economy, education is the new game-changer driving economic growth. Education, as Nelson Mandela says, "is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."From Indonesia to Pakistan to Kenya, education has immeasurable power to promote growth and stability. It is absolutely imperative that the United States seize the opportunity to help Haiti build a stronger school system from the ruins of its old, broken one—just as America coalesced to build a fast-improving, vibrant school system in New Orleans after the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. From devastation, beautiful flowers can grow—crisis can seed opportunities for transformational change. In 2001, Afghanistan had barely 900,000 boys in school. They now have almost seven million children in schools, almost 40 percent of whom are girls. Dramatic change can happen in a short period of time. It just requires the commitment to succeed. Educating girls and integrating them into the labor force is especially critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. It is hard to imagine a better world without a global commitment to providing better education for women and youth—including the 72 million children who do not attend primary school today. And don't forget that a better-educated world would be a safer world, too. Low educational attainment is one of the few statistically significant predictors of violence. My department has been pleased to partner with the U.S. Agency for International Development to help ensure that our best domestic practices are shared world-wide. The United States provides over a billion dollars annually to partner countries working on educational reform. Our goal for the coming year will be to work closely with global partners, including UNESCO, to promote qualitative improvements and system-strengthening. With such a shared commitment, we believe that we can greatly reduce the number of children out of school and ensure that the children who are in class are actually learning. Ultimately, education is the great equalizer. It is the one force that can consistently overcome differences in background, culture, and privilege. As the author Ben Wildavsky writes in his new book, The Great Brain Race, in the global economy "more and more people will have the chance... to advance based on what they know rather than who they are."

#### Middle skills are key to competition – lack of training damages the US middle skills industry.

Milken Institute 15 – The Milken Institute is an independent economic think tank based in Santa Monica, California that publishes research and hosts conferences that apply market-based principles and financial innovations to a variety of societal issues in the US and internationally, 2015 (“Middle-skills gap threatens U.S. competitiveness in the global economy”, Milken Institute, April 30, Available Online at http://www.milkeninstitute.org/blog/view/773, accessed 7/6/15)

To compete in a global economy, the U.S. needs to fill crucial middle-skills jobs in manufacturing, infrastructure, computers, health care and other industries that require post-secondary technical education and training. The problem is that there aren’t enough people who are trained for them. At the Milken Institute Global Conference, leaders in education and business discussed ways to close America’s skills gap. They also pointed to the necessity of addressing the large numbers of minorities and students in disadvantaged communities who are being left behind, a problem which, if left unresolved, could lead to an economic crisis worse than 2008. “The public education system is what needs to change,” said Eloy Ortiz Oakley, superintendent-president of Long Beach City College, whose partnership with the school district and California State University, Long Beach earned a $5 million state grant last month for innovation in higher education. “It is the gateway for the majority of people of color.” Chris Romer, president and co-founder of Quad Learning, Inc., creator of the American Honors college prep program, added that the path to a post-secondary employment certificate is harder for students with less “college knowledge.” To compound the challenge, businesses tend to recruit more from four-year universities than community colleges.

### Data Collection

#### Longitudinal data collection on student performance is good – “smart data” helps educators identify where educational reforms are necessary – Kentucky proves

Resnick 12 – Brian Resnick, staff correspondent at National Journal and a former producer of The Atlantic's National channel, citing a report by Data Quality Campaign, a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization that works to improve student achievement through effective data use, 2012 (“How Smarter Data Can Save U.S. Education”, The Atlantic, January 18, Available Online at http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/01/how-smarter-data-can-save-us-education/251519/, accessed 7/7/15, KM)

Collecting data on individual students over time may give educators the insight they need to fix America's schools. Here's one reason why No Child Left Behind is all but a failed initiative: One of its main metrics, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), is a horrendous measure of educational progress. With AYP, each state sets its own goals and assesses progress with its own metric. If one state meets AYP and another one does not, it's impossible to make a comparison. NCLB relied on data for improvement, but that data was so unscientific that it hardly had a chance at success. But, as a report from the Data Quality Campaign released today concludes, we may be on the verge of meaningful, data-backed reforms. Many states and school districts now have the capability to track individual students longitudinally, which means educators can compile electronic data of a student's yearly progress. In the aggregate, this information is invaluable as it pinpoints, rather than guesses at, the crucial milestones that mark the path toward higher-ed or career success. "We couldn't have done this ten years ago," Aimee Guidera, executive director of the Data Quality Campaign explains. When No Child Left behind started, the data platform it needed to succeed simply didn't exist. But, what the program did do effectively, Guidera says, is create a call for transparency in educational data. "AYP was all we had," she says. "Now, because states have the ability to follow students over time, every state has the capability to have a growth model." Below is an example of what a longitudinal report looks like. It shows a student's most likely outcome in the next grade, given his or her past progress. In this case, the student is proficient, but this data would help educators better recognize warning signs that he or she might fall off track -- and into that dark "unsatisfactory" region. If this makes education sound a lot like a business -- with growth models and performance reviews -- that's because, in a way, it is. Making good business decisions requires good data, but education hasn't always had access to that. "We've been asking them to do all these great things without giving them any feedback on what they are doing," Guidera says of America's schools. In compiling these reports and making them transparent (anonymously) to other educators and parents, schools can better predict what makes for success after high school. Schools can even see how many of their students need remediation when they arrive at college. If those numbers are high, they can update their curricula to better prepare students for college-level courses. It's an approach that appears to be working, at least anecdotally. Kentucky has been tracking its students' progress longitudinally since the early 2000s. From 2002 to 2008, Kentucky students saw significant increases in college readiness, and decreases in the need for remediation upon reaching college, according to the Data Quality Campaign. Comparability across states is still a problem, but Guidera says more states are adopting similar metrics. Perhaps if NCLB gets a reform, smart data will play a key role.

### Diverse, Local Standards Bad

#### Common core is better than any alternative — states have empirically failed.

Bennett 14 — William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin, J.D. from Harvard Law School, 2014 ("Common Core has no better alternative ," *CNN*, 12-2-2014, Available Online at http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/02/opinion/bennett-common-core/, Accessed 7-6-2015)

Local control has always been an essential right of education in America, but there was a growing problem: When different states with different standards and different tests proliferated, we ended up with unreliable measures of how our children are really doing.

A wide and disparate variety of education standards promotes chaos and deception. Realizing this, in 2009, a collaborative involving the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers began to discuss the need for common standards and accountability. The end goal is that an "A" in math in New Jersey should be equivalent to an "A" in math in Louisiana, or in California, and so on.

So began the coordinated effort from governors, educators and legislators to compose benchmarked standards that would be the same across state lines. The product became the Common Core State Standards. Its genesis was local and its purpose was to lift education performance through state, not federal, collaboration. This was the original intent of the Common Core. It is a worthy and necessary idea.

Unfortunately, outside forces have interfered with or distorted the idea, obscuring its real merits. Federal intrusions such as the Race to the Top grants have not been helpful. Common Core isn't without its problems, but some of have been exaggerated and some have been made up out of thin air. We can't lose sight of the original intent. Should Common Core fail, the movement -- decades in the making -- toward rigorous, common standards would be dealt a serious blow.

While various questions about Common Core and its implementation persist, such as how to handle data privacy or concerns that some of the standards may not be rigorous enough, individual states have the right and ability to craft their own supplemental solutions. For example, this year Ohio passed HB 487 to protect the confidentiality of student data and Florida altered its Common Core standards to include more advanced calculus standards.

Some of the criticisms leveled against Common Core stem from mistakes made in local implementations -- not from a uniform federal mandate. It is ironic that the very thing which many of Common Core's critics value the most -- local control -- has often resulted in curricula, subject matter, readings, and exercises in local classrooms that are objectionable, substandard, or politically tendentious.

If Common Core fails, education reform will regress and American students' flat or falling test results in learning will continue. It must be noted that many of Common Core's critics still lack a persuasive alternative or any alternative at all.

#### Common core is better than the state standards

Bleiberg and West 14 — Joshua Bleiberg, Center Coordinator at the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, Edm in Education Policy and Mangement from Harvard, Darrell West, Vice President and Director of Governance Studies and founding director of the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, PhD in Political Science from Indiana University, 2014 (“In Defense of Common Core Standards” *Brookings Center for Technology Innovation*, March, Available online at <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/03/common-core-state-standards/bleiberg_west_common-core-state-standards.pdf>, Accessed 7-7-15)

Common Core will succeed where past standards based reform efforts have failed. Education reformers contend that the Common Core Standards were designed with teacher, researcher, and pedagogy expert feedback.8 A recent analysis of standards from across the country found that the Common Core was better than most state standards. Byrd and others found that the Common Core was superior to state standards for 39 states in math and 37 states in English. For 33 states the standards are superior to both.9

#### Most common core issues are a result of local schools, not common core — the Con’s complaints are fiction

Lahey 14 — Jessica Lahey, contributing writer for The Atlantic and an English teacher, 2014 (“Confusing Math Homework? Don’t Blame the Common Core,” *The Atlantic*, April 3rd, available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/confusing-math-homework-don-t-blame-the-common-core/360064/>, Accessed 7-8-15)

Journalists, teachers, and parents should heed her restraint. In order to defeat the enormous problems that plague education, we must divide and conquer. There is much to be angry about, but fuzzy math, school choice, poverty, overcrowded classrooms, and state-mandated standardized testing were threats long before the Common Core State Standards arrived. If parents are frustrated by the methodologies popping up in their children’s classrooms, they should blame those responsible: the states, districts, and schools. As we rally together and arm ourselves with pitchforks and torches, it would be wise to pause, collect our wits, and remember that the enemy we seek to run out of town on a rail may just be a fictional monster of our own making.

### Improved Education/Education Reform

#### Common Core standards remove confusion, allow innovation through research, encourage collaboration, and improve materials

Bleiberg and West 14 — Joshua Bleiberg, Center Coordinator at the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, Edm in Education Policy and Mangement from Harvard, Darrell West, Vice President and Director of Governance Studies and founding director of the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, PhD in Political Science from Indiana University, 2014 (“In Defense of Common Core Standards” *Brookings Center for Technology Innovation*, March, Available online at <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/03/common-core-state-standards/bleiberg_west_common-core-state-standards.pdf>, Accessed 7-7-15)

Past versions of standards had systemic flaws. Standards in some states were incoherent and not useful as guiding documents. Additionally, some districts had multiple sets of standards that were technically aligned but difficult to use. For example certain school districts had their own standards that were more rigorous than mandated state standards. Others used both the state standards for math and for national standards like the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics. Some states omitted entire grades from their standards. Predictably the effect of unintelligible and duplicative standards is to confuse teachers.

Research on standards suggests that a harmonization tipping point exists. The benefits of adopting standards are proportional to the number of participants and the degree to which they embrace the standards. Utility from each additional adopter is low initially until a stable network develops at which point a bandwagon effect begins. Then these guides have a larger positive impact on each individual user.27 It is possible that past standards efforts have failed to reach this tipping point because of a lack of user adoption.

According to the popular definition of standards, they serve as a countervailing force to innovation that restricts flexibility and creativity. Paradoxically, standards spark innovation. Agreeing to coordinate certain technologies or strategies allows creators space and time to focus on solving problems. The developer of an application for a mobile phone doesn’t need to invent the phone, the gyroscope in it, or the code for taking a picture. Similarly, standards let teachers focus on how to help their students learn. Standards then make it easy to plug a lesson from another teacher into their own curriculum. They also have benefits for the developers of curriculum materials. Critically standards allow innovators to take calculated risks. Large incumbent firms dominate education content creation. New entrants can take the time to develop materials that work with the Common Core knowing the standards will remain in place for years. They can also test new products on a small scale in a particular classroom and have greater confidence about their effectiveness in other classrooms across the nation. Education is in desperate need of innovation which standards can help to support.28

The Common Core can make it easier to communicate ideas between and within the professions that contribute to education. The organizational structure of schooling is insulated from change. Teachers are largely cloistered in their classrooms. Other professionals like psychologists, cognitive development experts, social workers and others remain largely isolated from the process of teaching. Standards create a common language for discussing the goals of education. For example consider how a leading researcher would try to improve education in the status quo. They might develop a series of interventions they find has positive impacts and then design a curriculum. Eventually someone may cite that work as a part of professional development or in a book. Alternatively researchers could study students who struggled with a specific standard and develop tailored interventions. Instead of a generic finding of increased reading proficiency the specific strategy would have far greater value for practitioners. The merit of standards is how they refocus professionals to work in ways that mutually benefit each other.

National standards will likely have the largest potential benefit on personalized learning systems. Although education technology has improved by leaps and bounds over the past decade. Personalized learning is far from commonplace. Standards could push teaching software into new territory for several reasons. First, standards allow for even larger big data systems. The ubiquity of the term big data has rendered the name meaningless. However, there are scales of big data. The data that Amazon uses is an order of magnitude larger than anything in the education sector. Using the same standards and assessments allows researchers to compare and access larger troves of data. The increased size makes a real difference after splits for specific demographics. For example a database that includes hundreds of thousands of students may have only a few low income students with learning disabilities who attend charter schools. As the students in a sample decreases so too does the statistical power which can turn strong results into weak ones. Standards can also fundamentally improve how big data analytics work. In most big data systems researchers understand learning as the greater likelihood that a student answers a question. Incorporating larger data sets both in terms of the number of students but also in the type of assessments allows personalized learning designers to develop a more robust definition of learning than a correct answer on a series of multiple choice questions. Together these changes could lead to a personalized learning revolution.

#### Standards are key to education reform — they create a platform for innovation

Bleiberg and West 14 — Joshua Bleiberg, Center Coordinator at the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, Edm in Education Policy and Mangement from Harvard, Darrell West, Vice President and Director of Governance Studies and founding director of the Brookings Center for Technology Innovation, PhD in Political Science from Indiana University, 2014 (“In Defense of Common Core Standards” *Brookings Center for Technology Innovation*, March, Available online at <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/03/common-core-state-standards/bleiberg_west_common-core-state-standards.pdf>, Accessed 7-7-15)

Standards whether they apply to hydrants or teaching are meant to simplify complicated problems. We ask too much of our teachers. It is unreasonable to give them a classroom full of students and take full responsibility for teaching them on their own. To provide support researchers and innovators need an avenue into classrooms. Standards create a platform that allows for the delivery of new techniques and technologies. Together through standards Americas educators can begin the desperately needed transformation our education system.

Another benefit of standards is indirect network effects. Indirect network effects occur in complex systems that have multiple components. The greater the number of people who use a system improves the utility of each individual using that system. When choosing between two similar products like Blue-Ray or HD-DVD the user wants the system with the greatest number of users because studios will have an incentive to release more movies for that system. Utility doesn’t increase linearly with each new user, but after a critical mass is reached all users benefit because of confidence the system will continue to receive support.21

Education standards could generate network effects for personalized learning systems. The Common Core map skills to individual standards. This process is key to developing personalized learning systems which rely on big data analysis. The algorithms that underlie these technologies need people to attribute meaning to the data. A computer can’t identify that a student needed to understand quadratic equations to answer a multiple choice question on a test. Because standards differ across states developers of these systems must remap the standards numerous times. This is expensive and time consuming. After the Common Core software developers can design tools for any state that uses the national standards. Switching costs will go into effect for schools that considered moving away from the Core because personalized learning software would no longer work.

Other indirect network effects would likely create benefits for standards adopters. The greater the number of districts and states that adopt the Common Core the greater the incentive for the developers of curriculum materials to develop products for the market. Furthermore, once the size of the network reaches a certain point, a bandwagon effect develops and the pace of adoption accelerates. This corresponds with increased investment from the private sector in developing new curriculum materials.22

### A2: Reduced Creative Thinking

#### Common core standards promote critical thinking—they aren’t a static curriculum and they take focus off memorization

Elliott 13 — Phillip Elliott, Senior Education Reporter at *Huffington Post,* 2015 ("Meet The Education Standards At The Center Of A Tea Party Firestorm," *Huffington Post*, December 1st, Available Online at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/01/common-core_n_4367550.html>, Accessed 7-6-15)

The Common Core State Standards are academic benchmarks that outline the skills a student should have at each level.

For instance, third-graders should know how to find the perimeter of a figure. A fifth-grader should be able to compare and contrast two characters from a story.

The standards were created by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to improve academic achievement and increase accountability. President Barack Obama and his administration embraced them.

That led critics, including Republican members of Congress, to call the standards a national curriculum, or "Obamacore." The standards are not a curriculum, despite the opponents' claims. Each state, school or even teacher can determine how to help students reach those standards.

Alaska, Texas, Nebraska and Virginia decided not to adopt them. Minnesota has adopted only the English standards.

At the core of the standards is a reduced emphasis on memorization. Students now have to connect the dots and apply critical thinking. It's what experts call higher-order thinking. Teachers say it's preparing students for life after high school.

That has made classrooms much more of a hands-on proposition.

#### The Con is an urban legend — the Common Core tests do not brainwash kids, and even if they were banned, state tests fill in.

McKenna 15 — Laura McKenna MA and Ph.D. in PoliSci, writer for The Atlantic, former professor of Political Science at Ramapo College, 2015 (“Suburbia and Its Common Core Conspiracy Theories,” The Atlantic, February 12th, Available Online at http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/02/suburbia-and-its-common-core-conspiracy-theories/385424/, Accessed 06-23-2015)

This March, millions of school kids will take new standardized tests that are designed to accompany the Common Core standards. As that deadline looms, anxiety grows in suburban communities. Conspiracy theories, too, have grown out of parents’ natural instinct to protect their children from bureaucracies and self-styled experts. A teacher backlash against the school-reform efforts and the lack of leadership on this issue have made it more difficult for parents to get facts.

The Common Core standards are, of course, a set of broad, universal academic goals in math and English-language arts for public-school students of all ages. With the standards come national standardized tests that, in theory, will allow policymakers to compare performance across states and different demographics. Forty-three states, as well as the District of Columbia, have signed onto the Common Core program, and most of them have joined one of two testing "consortiums" known by their (rather unfortunate) acronyms: the PARCC or the SBAC. But the process has been far from smooth. More than half of the 26 states that initially signed onto the PARCC exam in 2010 have dropped out; only a dozen states will use the test this spring. Seventeen other states will take the SBAC, which has also sparked controversy, while the remaining ones will use their own tests.

Suburban parents are frustrated by not being able to convince their local school boards to alter the new policies.

Among the most vocal opponents to the new standards are conservative, Tea Party Republicans, who are ideologically opposed to any expansion of the federal government—something they inaccurately equate to the Common Core initiative. And these politically motivated critics, who have rallied against a national system of learning standards for decades, have their own conspiracy theories about the Common Core, too. These include claims that the the standards will turn students gay, that it preaches an anti-American agenda, and that Muslim Brotherhood and communists shaped the content.

Complicating matters, other state-level politicians have fought against a uniform system of standards and tests because they’re wary of seeing how the kids in their turf stack up against children elsewhere. No Child Left Behind did little to unify learning systems across the states, and what remains are essentially 50 different sets of standards and 50 different systems for measuring achievement. That makes it all but impossible to compare test results in, say, Connecticut and Texas. And with the huge variations in how much states spend on education, it seems illogical to assume that kids across the nation, regardless of where they reside, will perform equally well on a test such as the PARCC.

Now, amid all the backlash, an unlikely subculture appears to be emerging in the anti-Common Core world: suburban parents. Even U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has taken note of the trend, who last November told a group of superintendents that "white suburban moms" were resisting the implementation of the Common Core. His theory? "All of a sudden … their child isn’t as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn’t quite as good as they thought they were."

I happen to live in a middle-class suburb outside of New York City—one that could easily be considered the capital of "white suburban moms." And I’m realizing Duncan was on to something: Their wrath is real, and it’s based largely on misperception and widespread fearmongering perpetuated by the Tea Party skeptics and anxious state policymakers.

My friends and neighbors post links almost daily on Facebook to articles claiming the Common Core "curriculum," as they perceive it, is destroying American youth. It has single-handedly taken recess away from kids, they argue. The upcoming tests demoralize kids and teachers. The new curricula and tests are an assault on an otherwise idyllic world where kids used to learn naturally—like those lucky children in Finland. Instead of actually instilling knowledge in students, teachers drill irrelevant facts into kids’ heads in order to game the testing results. And since the new exams will be taken on computers, hackers might even reveal the test results to colleges.

While there may be elements of truth in some of those parents’ fears, these protests have developed an irrational, hysterical bent. And they often have very real implications when it comes to public policy; these theories and fears have already led to political action at the local level. Parents have formed groups that claim to disseminate "the facts" about the Common Core. They share tips for opting out of the tests. They read prepared speeches at school board meetings. One local debate on the Common Core hosted by the League of Women Voters was standing room only.

The reality of the Common Core model is much more boring. America’s schools could be better, no doubt. They could be more equal. They could be more effective in preparing kids for the new, global economy and the ever-growing rigors of higher education. But there is no evidence that one set of standards, that a single standardized test, will alter the basic school experience of children. They will probably still have to do book reports on Abraham Lincoln and To Kill a Mockingbird. They almost certainly will still have time to joke around on the playground with their buddies. They will be evaluated by teachers’ exams and rubrics and probably won’t be penalized by the Common Core tests.

One common fear I’ve heard among parents is that the Common Core represents a new emphasis on standardized testing that takes away from learning time. But, in America, kids of all ages already take standardized tests; schools have long administered state assessments. And that’s on top of the alphabet soup of nationally accepted proficiency exams: the SATs, ACTs, GREs, GMATs, LSATs, you name it. The new Common Core tests do not threaten to significantly alter the American school experience.

The PARCC test for its part doesn’t require much more time than previous assessments. In the past, all public-school students in New Jersey, for example, took a state-designed standardized math and reading test. Fifth-grade students had 316 minutes to fill in the bubbles on an answer sheet. The PARCC’s fifth-grade test, meanwhile, will take 405 minutes. That might seem like a big difference for a 10-year-old, but the 89-minute difference doesn’t have much impact on the 180-day school year. That’s about a quarter of the time that my teenage boys like to spend playing Super Mario Brothers on any given Saturday.

### Con Evidence is Flawed

#### Anti-Common Core agitators are the anti-Vaxxers of the education movement — they write clickbait articles to scare parents into warrantless outrage.

McKenna 15 — Laura McKenna MA and Ph.D. in PoliSci, writer for The Atlantic, former professor of Political Science at Ramapo College, 2015 (“Suburbia and Its Common Core Conspiracy Theories,” The Atlantic, February 12th, Available Online at http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/02/suburbia-and-its-common-core-conspiracy-theories/385424/, Accessed 06-23-2015)

A typical suburban parent, like all parents, has an intense, natural instinct to protect his or her kids. We parents are hard-wired to protect our babies from the unknown—and for the most part, this is a good thing. After all, protection of offspring and suspicion of outsiders have kept the human species alive for millions of years. But this instinct sometimes takes parents in the wrong direction. Just look at the anti-vaccination movement: Though the instincts of anti-vaccination parent activists are pure, their actions have resulted in what’s arguably a public-health crisis in the country.

Many parents view the Common Core and the accompanying tests as a threat to their ability to keep their kids safe in a hostile world. Suburban parents, who are known for being particularly involved in their kids’ education and traditionally enjoy a good deal of influence on district policymaking, are frustrated by not being able to convince their local school boards to alter the standards or testing requirements. They worry that they won’t be able to help kids with homework, because the new learning materials rely on teaching methods foreign to them. They worry that, ultimately, their kids will be unemployed and living in the basement in their 20s.

Then social media steps in. There are those Facebook posts promoting articles with click-bait titles like "Parents Opting Kids Out of Common Core Face Threats From Schools," or "Common Core Test Fail Kids In New York Again. Here’s How," or "5 Reasons the Common Core Is Ruining Childhood." I can picture it in my head: articles with stock photos of children sitting miserably at a desk or ominous images of broken pencils. These articles go viral in certain communities—not least in suburbia, where parents like (and have the time) to stay on top of things and are often used to getting their way. Virtual networking makes it all too easy to be outraged these days.

Tea Party conservatives and suburban parents might not have a lot in common, but they seem to increasingly share a distrust of bureaucracy, so-called experts, and federal rules. The sources of their opposition, of course, are entirely different: For Tea Party conservatives, it’s about ideology; for parents, it’s about protection. Politics makes for strange bedfellows, indeed.

#### Con articles are total fiction — teachers angry at being evaluated have gotten parents riled up over nothing.

McKenna 15 — Laura McKenna MA and Ph.D. in PoliSci, writer for The Atlantic, former professor of Political Science at Ramapo College, 2015 (“Suburbia and Its Common Core Conspiracy Theories,” The Atlantic, February 12th, Available Online at http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/02/suburbia-and-its-common-core-conspiracy-theories/385424/, Accessed 06-23-2015)

Teachers have fostered parental protests, too. Teachers’ unions were initially very supportive of the Common Core, and educators helped shape its goals. However, support from educators began to wane in the past year, when state legislatures started to create policies tying test scores to their pay, largely through new teacher-evaluation systems. The new stipulations have caused unrest among teachers across the country, including those in my suburban New Jersey school district, adding a new layer of politics to the Common Core.

A recent nationwide poll conducted by researchers at Education Next found that teachers’ approval rate of the Common Core dropped from 76 percent in 2013 to only 46 percent in 2014. Paul Peterson, one of the Education Next researchers and the Director of Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance in the Graduate School of Education, confirmed that teachers are dissatisfied with the evaluation component. But, Peterson added, they’re also more informed than the general public is about the standards and accompanying tests.

Parents take their cues about education from their children’s teachers, and unfortunately that often means important facts are lost in translation once they exit the classroom. The bottom line is that if the teachers aren’t happy, the parents aren’t happy either.

Ultimately, the blurring between Common Core fact and fiction reveals a major flaw in the implementation of the program. No one group or individual took the lead in informing parents what the standards actually look like in the classroom and how it would affect their kids. Without political and education leaders providing valid, fact-based justifications for the new testing system and a clear, jargon-free explanation of new teaching strategies, suburban parents are easily influenced by others.

#### Con articles are written by angry parents who don’t have the details on Common Core.

McKenna 15 — Laura McKenna MA and Ph.D. in PoliSci, writer for The Atlantic, former professor of Political Science at Ramapo College, 2015 (“Suburbia and Its Common Core Conspiracy Theories,” The Atlantic, February 12th, Available Online at http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/02/suburbia-and-its-common-core-conspiracy-theories/385424/, Accessed 06-23-2015)

Parents need to understand why a new universal set of standards is important, particularly parents in good school districts where schools are working well. They need to know how their kids will benefit from this program—and if their kids won’t benefit, parents need to know why these test results serve the larger public good, that they can help shape policies that will help others. Parents need to know that their kids will continue to be graded based on their teachers’ assessments and that the tests really serve to provide data for administrators and political leaders who can set policies based on students’ overall performance. Parents need to know how the Common Core differs from previous state curricula and how it will affect their kids on a daily basis. Simple facts—that the Common Core does not prescribe certain textbooks, for example—would go a long way in dispelling confusion.

Perhaps the "white suburban mom" protests will dissipate after the test results are publicized. Suburban schools tend to be relatively high-achieving and have historically done very well on state-level standardized tests, so there is no reason to believe that the new tests will produce drastically different results. Parents in these areas, moreover, often supplement their children’s education with tutors and other resources. These schools will do fine on any national comparison.

But without guidance and information, parents are unable to sort through fact and fiction, rumors and politics. Sadly, this confusion might unravel a potentially good program.

#### Their criticism is a product of media sensationalism — “common core failures” are the fault of individual schools

Bennett 15 — William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin, J.D. from Harvard Law School, 2015 (“The Common Core: Setting The Record Straight,” *Forbes,* February 7th, Available online at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2015/02/20/the-common-core-setting-the-record-straight/>, Accessed 7-7-15)

The Common Core is a set of standards—not a curriculum

Recall that the Common Core is a set of standards—not a curriculum—which details what students are expected to learn in each grade. It does not specify how lessons are taught in the classroom or what textbooks must be used. Other than four foundational historical documents—the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address—there is no required reading list. If you examine the actual Common Core standards, which are readily available online, you will quickly discover that this Islamic vocabulary worksheet, or anything else like it, is nowhere to be found.

The Common Core leaves the designation, approval, and use of textbooks, worksheets and assignments to local control; in most states, that means school districts and teachers. It is up to local educators and policy makers to choose how they will implement the Common Core standards. However, in such a huge and lucrative market, problems of implementation still arise. In some cases, a textbook company will market its books as Common Core “aligned” or “approved,” leading some parents or educators to believe that the Common Core standards themselves dictated that particular textbook. And in some cases, local school boards or educators falsely attribute their curriculum choices to the Common Core.

It is not exactly clear which of these problems occurred in Farmville Central High School, part of Pitt County Schools. However, it is clear that Common Core was not the problem.

Sensational news stories attract far more attention than nuanced policy debates

As is often the case, sensational, even if false, news stories attract far more attention than nuanced policy debates. In this instance, the notion of Islamic propaganda in American schools promised more interest than a detailed explanation and examination of the Common Core and curriculum decisions made by locally elected officials in Pitt County.

These myths and lies spread throughout the media like wildfire, and opponents of the Common Core know they can fan the flames of opposition far more effectively with these sensational and scurrilous accusations rather than engaging in an honest, intellectual policy debate.

A quick survey of other Common Core-related myths in print include accusations that the Common Core variously promotes left wing ideology, racism, white privilege, global warming, Obamacare, Communism, sexually explicit materials, and so on. None of these accusations is true to the Common Core. Again, if such materials are being used in a classroom, they are the product of decisions made by teachers , principals and local school boards. Concerned parents should address their anger at the parties responsible.

It is time for integrity and truth in this debate. The issue of honest standards of learning for our children is too important to be buried in an avalanche of misinformation and demonization.

#### Con evidence is suspect — Public debate on Common Core is based on urban legends propagated by lazy media and scared parents. A careful review of the primary source documents reveals that Common Core is a diverse set of standards to ensure that all American students are learning.

Seay 14 — Bob Seay, Editor in Chief of NewsPrism.com, former teacher, 2014 (“Common Core and Media Spin,” Huffington Post Education, August 18th, Available Online at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-seay/common-core-and-media-spi_b_5684964.html>, Accessed 06-30-2015)

Legitimate questions are buried beneath the noise

There are legitimate reasons to oppose Common Core, America's latest effort at education reform. You might be concerned that the standards leave no room for student exploration and creativity. You could follow the money and question the substantial profits promised to the publishers of Common Core resources. You may feel that Common Core intentionally sets schools up to fail, leading to a privatized, for-profit educational system and the end of public schools. These are valid concerns that deserve serious public debate.

But those are not the conversations we are having. Instead, frightened parents are asking whether tests will use posture sensing chairs, eye scans, and other spyware technology to measure a student's emotional response to questions. Parents have been told that Common Core is a massive surveillance program designed to collect and sell personal information about students. Parents have read false reports about schools teaching third graders about sexual self-gratification.

Pretty scary stuff.

Fortunately, none of it is true.

Pro Tip: When researching a topic, read the original sources before accepting the word of potentially biased news reports, commentaries, and guest speakers.

Actual facts about Common Core are available on the Common Core website. Information about how Common Core is being implemented may be found on the Department of Education websites of the 43 states that have adopted it. Those who oppose Common Core rarely include links to these rather obvious primary sources which could be used to support or refute their arguments. Instead, they link to websites that support their point of view, creating a kind of self-affirming loop of misinformation. Never doubt the power of the media echo chamber.

Facts about Common Core

The purpose of Common Core is to provide the English Literacy and Math skills necessary to compete in a 21st Century global market. This is not a hypothetical problem. American students placed 27th in math skills, 17th in reading, and 20th in scientific knowledge among students from the 34 nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These results have significant economic and even national security implications.

Common Core addresses Math and English Language Arts. All of the Common Core standards for other subjects relate back to either Math or English. Common Core standards for history, for example, are more accurately described as standards for language arts as taught within the context of a history class. History standards emphasize being able to use and cite sources correctly, determining the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, and related skills. The history standards also include "distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text," which may explain why some opinion writers are so opposed to idea of Common Core. Science standards reflect this same emphasis on math and language arts. All teachers are now expected to emphasize the quality of student writing, their ability to use reference materials, and other language arts skills.

What about sex ed?

Common Core does not address sex education or the broader topic of health education. While it is true that some school districts in some states have approved class materials that discuss sex in frank and, some would say, inappropriate terms, these materials are not part of Common Core. It is unclear how sex ed came to be included in discussions of Common Core, but it has. In reality, decisions about school curriculum and book choices are made at the state and local levels. The National Sexuality Education Standards (NSES) that are used by many states and local school districts as a guideline for sex ed "do not address any specific health content areas, including content for sexuality education." Neither does NSES list specific books or other content for classroom use. Schools are free to choose or to develop their own materials, including materials for abstinence education. There are no Common Core requirements in this area.

American schools have a long history of local control. Common Core does not change that. In most states, local school boards tend to take community standards into account when they are considering purchasing books or other classroom materials. Like all elected officials, school board members are accountable to voters. If local citizens oppose the policies of their school districts, then they may choose to elect board members whose values are more consistent with those of the local community.

### We Should Improve it, Not Abolish It

#### Reforming Common Core solves – allowing for constant revision and updates resolves their harms without sacrificing benefits.

Ravitch 14 – Diane Ravitch, a historian of education, educational policy analyst, and research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Previously, she was a U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education. Ravitch is a 3-time winner of the Delta Kappa Gamma Educators’ Award. She has a PhD from Columbia University in education history, 2014 (“Everything you need to know about Common Core — Ravitch”, The Washington Post, January 11, Available Online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/01/18/everything-you-need-to-know-about-common-core-ravitch/, accessed 7/2/15, KM)

I do not mean to dismiss the Common Core standards altogether. They could be far better, if there were a process whereby experienced teachers were able to fix them. They could be made developmentally appropriate for the early grades, so that children have time for play and games, as well as learning to read and do math and explore nature. The numerical demands for 50-50 or 70-30 literature vs. informational text should be eliminated. They serve no useful purpose and they have no justification. In every state, teachers should work together to figure out how the standards can be improved. Professional associations like the National Council for the Teaching of English and the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics should participate in a process by which the standards are regularly reviewed, revised, and updated by classroom teachers and scholars to respond to genuine problems in the field. The Common Core standards should be decoupled from standardized testing, especially online standardized testing. Most objections to the standards are caused by the testing. The tests are too long, and many students give up; the passing marks on the tests were set so high as to create failure. Yet the test scores will be used to rate students, teachers, and schools. The standardized testing should become optional. It should include authentic writing assignments that are judged by humans, not by computers. It too needs oversight by professional communities of scholars and teachers. There is something about the Common Core standards and testing, about their demand for uniformity and standardization, that reeks of early twentieth century factory-line thinking. There is something about them that feels obsolete. Today, most sectors of our economy have standards that are open-sourced and flexible, that rely upon the wisdom of practitioners, that are constantly updated and improved. In the present climate, the Common Core standards and testing will become the driving force behind the creation of a test-based meritocracy. With David Coleman in charge of the College Board, the SAT will be aligned with the Common Core; so will the ACT. Both testing organizations were well represented in the writing of the standards; representatives of these two organizations comprised 12 of the 27 members of the original writing committee. The Common Core tests are a linchpin of the federal effort to commit K-12 education to the new world of Big Data. The tests are the necessary ingredient to standardize teaching, curriculum, instruction, and schooling. Only those who pass these rigorous tests will get a high school diploma. Only those with high scores on these rigorous tests will be able to go to college. No one has come up with a plan for the 50% or more who never get a high school diploma. These days, a man or woman without a high school diploma has meager chances to make their way in this society. They will end up in society’s dead-end jobs. Some might say this is just. I say it is not just. I say that we have allowed the testing corporations to assume too much power in allotting power, prestige, and opportunity. Those who are wealthy can afford to pay fabulous sums for tutors so their children can get high scores on standardized tests and college entrance exams. Those who are affluent live in districts with ample resources for their schools. Those who are poor lack those advantages. Our nation suffers an opportunity gap, and the opportunity gap creates a test score gap. You may know Michael Young’s book The Rise of the Meritocracy. It was published in 1958 and has gone through many editions. A decade ago, Young added a new introduction in which he warned that a meritocracy could be sad and fragile. He wrote: If the rich and powerful were encouraged by the general culture to believe that they fully deserved all they had, how arrogant they could become, and if they were convinced it was all for the common good, how ruthless in pursuing their own advantage. Power corrupts, and therefore one of the secrets of a good society is that power should always be open to criticism. A good society should provide sinew for revolt as well as for power. But authority cannot be humbled unless ordinary people, however much they have been rejected by the educational system, have the confidence to assert themselves against the mighty. If they think themselves inferior, if they think they deserve on merit to have less worldly goods and less worldly power than a select minority, they can be damaged in their own self-esteem, and generally demoralized. Even if it could be demonstrated that ordinary people had less native ability than those selected for high position, that would not mean that they deserved to get less. Being a member of the “lucky sperm club” confers no moral right or advantage. What one is born with, or without, is not of one’s own doing. We must then curb the misuse of the Common Core standards: Those who like them should use them, but they should be revised continually to adjust to reality. Stop the testing. Stop the rating and ranking. Do not use them to give privilege to those who pass them or to deny the diploma necessary for a decent life. Remove the high-stakes that policymakers intend to attach to them. Use them to enrich instruction, but not to standardize it. I fear that the Common Core plan of standards and testing will establish a test-based meritocracy that will harm our democracy by parceling out opportunity, by ranking and rating every student in relation to their test scores. We cannot have a decent democracy unless we begin with the supposition that every human life is of equal value. Our society already has far too much inequality of wealth and income. We should do nothing to stigmatize those who already get the least of society’s advantages. We should bend our efforts to change our society so that each and every one of us has the opportunity to learn, the resources needed to learn, and the chance to have a good and decent life, regardless of one’s test scores.

# Standardized Testing Bad -- General

### Won’t Solve the Root Cause

#### Poverty and discrimination are the cause of education problems

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Public education is not broken. It is not failing or declining. The diagnosis is wrong, and the solutions of the corporate reformers are wrong. Our urban schools are in trouble because of concentrated poverty and racial segregation. But public education as such is not “broken.” Public education is in a crisis only so far as society is and only so far as this new narrative of crisis has destabilized it. The solutions proposed by the self-proclaimed reformers have not worked as promised. They have failed even by their own most highly valued measure, which is test scores. At the same time, the reformers’ solutions have had a destructive impact on education as a whole. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 159-163). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Tests won’t solve these root causes

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

What began as a movement for testing and accountability has turned into a privatization movement. President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind, with its unrealistic goals, has fed the privatization frenzy. The overreliance on and misuse of testing and data have created a sense of crisis, lending credibility to claims that American public education is failing and in decline. Yes, we have problems, but those problems are concentrated where poverty and racial segregation are concentrated. The reformers say they care about poverty, but they do not address it other than to insist upon private management of the schools in urban districts; the reformers ignore racial segregation altogether, apparently accepting it as inevitable. Thus, they leave the root causes of low academic performance undisturbed. What began as a movement to “save minority children from failing schools” and narrow the achievement gap by privatizing their schools has not accomplished that goal, but the movement is undaunted. It is now intent on advancing into middle-income districts in the cities and suburbs as well. This is already happening. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 202-205). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### Private Industry

#### Billions goes to private industry, but no evidence testing is valuable

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

The law has come with a hefty price tag for taxpayers. A 2012 study by the Brookings Institution [determined](http://www.brookings.edu/%7E/media/research/files/reports/2012/11/29%20cost%20of%20assessment%20chingos/11_assessment_chingos_final.pdf) that states spend $1.7 billion per year on testing, an enormous increase over the $423 million states spent in 2001 before NCLB, [according](http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2001/02/27/special-report-states-pay-$400-million-for-tests-in-2001) to the Pew Center on the States. All of this money has fueled a booming testing industry, with companies like Pearson racking up billions in sales. A *POLITICO* [investigation](http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026.html) published on February 10, 2015 revealed that Pearson receives tens of millions in taxpayer dollars even though there is “little proof its products and services are effective.”

#### Pearson generating billions in revenue with no privacy protections

Stephanie Simon, 2-10-15, Politico, “No Profit Left Behind,” <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026> DOA: 10-26-15

The British publishing giant Pearson had made few inroads in the United States — aside from distributing the TV game show “Family Feud” — when it announced plans in the summer of 2000 to spend $2.5 billion on an American testing company.

It turned out to be an exceptionally savvy move.

The next year, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which mandated millions of new standardized tests for millions of kids in public schools. Pearson was in a prime position to capitalize.

From that perch, the company expanded rapidly, seizing on many subsequent reform trends, from online learning to the Common Core standards adopted in more than 40 states. The company has reaped the benefits: Half its $8 billion in annual global sales comes from its North American education division.

But Pearson’s dominance does not always serve U.S. students or taxpayers well.

A POLITICO investigation has found that Pearson stands to make tens of millions in taxpayer dollars and cuts in student tuition from deals arranged without competitive bids in states from Florida to Texas. The review also found Pearson’s contracts set forth specific performance targets — but don’t penalize the company when it fails to meet those standards. And in the higher ed realm, the contracts give Pearson extensive access to personal student data, with few constraints on how it is used.

POLITICO examined hundreds of pages of contracts, business plans and email exchanges, as well as tax filings, lobbying reports and marketing materials, in the first comprehensive look at Pearson’s business practices in the United States.

The investigation found that public officials often commit to buying from Pearson because it’s familiar, even when there’s little proof its products and services are effective.

Read more: <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026#ixzz3pgcz4Vbx>

#### Pearson is the largest custodian of student data anywhere

Stephanie Simon, 2-10-15, Politico, “No Profit Left Behind,” <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026> DOA: 10-26-15

Pearson wields enormous influence over American education.

It writes the textbooks and tests that drive instruction in public schools across the nation.

Its software grades student essays, tracks student behavior and [diagnoses](http://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/products/100000942/quotient-adhd-test.html" \t "_blank) — and [treats](http://www.cogmed.com/educators" \t "_blank) — attention deficit disorder. The company administers [teacher licensing](http://www.pearsonassessments.com/teacherlicensure/edtpa.html" \t "_blank) exams and coaches teachers once they’re in the classroom. It advises principals. It operates a [network](http://www.connectionsacademy.com/home.aspx" \t "_blank) of three dozen online public schools. It co-owns the for-profit company that now administers the GED.

A top executive [boasted](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgV9DssLsXg" \t "_blank) in 2012 that Pearson is the largest custodian of student data anywhere.

And that’s just its K-12 business

#### Pearson profits because of testing

Stephanie Simon, 2-10-15, Politico, “No Profit Left Behind,” <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026> DOA: 10-26-15

Conspiracy theorists sometimes suggest that Pearson has a sinister hold on federal and state education policy. In peak years, it has spent about $1 million lobbying Congress and perhaps $1 million more on the state level, with a particular focus on Texas, according to state and federal records.

But that’s not an outsize number for such a large company. By comparison, the National Education Association, the biggest teachers union in the U.S., spent $2.5 million lobbying Congress in 2013, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

“The policies that Pearson is benefiting from may be wrongheaded in a million ways, but it strikes me as deeply unfair to blame Pearson for them,” said Jonathan Zimmerman, an education historian at New York University. “When the federal government starts doing things like requiring all states to test all kids, there’s going to be gold in those hills. The people we’ve elected have created a landscape that’s allowed Pearson to prosper.”

#### Next generation tests, such as Common Core tests, make everything even worse. The testing companies end up controlling all of the curriculum and the outcomes

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The Common Core State Standards, touted as “fewer, higher and deeper” and emphasizing ideas like critical thinking and logical reasoning in English Language Arts and math, were introduced in 2010 by Achieve, Inc., a nonprofit with considerable backing from the Gates Foundation. They have a growing chorus of detractors: Oklahoma, Indiana, and South Carolina dropped the standards in the spring of 2014, leaving them in place in forty-two states, and they have been the target of right-wing protests from Glenn Beck and others. Educators’ groups, teachers unions, parent groups, and others who oppose the Core tend to conflate it with the drift toward high-stakes testing. But what about the tests themselves?

The federal government funded two state consortia to create the tests to the tune of $ 330 million. When the consortia, PARCC, and Smarter Balanced were announced in 2010, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said, “I am convinced that this new generation of state assessments will be an absolute game-changer in public education . . . many teachers will have the state assessments they have longed for— tests of critical thinking skills and complex student learning that are not just fill-in-the-bubble tests of basic skills but support good teaching in the classroom.” The consortium assessments were set to roll out in the 2014– 2015 school year. Joe Willhoft is the executive director of the Smarter Balanced assessment consortium. He says the Common Core tests will be more useful than older tests because they are given by computer, so teachers can see and apply the results more immediately. Still, the new tests will have most of the same problems as the old tests. They are still cheap. The Smarter Balanced assessment package, for example, is estimated at $ 27.30 per student. This is cheaper than what two-thirds of states in the consortium are currently paying. They’re cheap because they are still largely multiple choice and still cover limited subjects in limited ways. And because they are multiple choice and limited, they’ll still be error-prone, coachable, and likely to distort the curriculum. The Gordon Commission, an independent panel of experts, concluded in a 2013 review of the Common Core– aligned assessments: “The progress made by the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia in assessment development, while significant, will be far from what is ultimately needed for either accountability or classroom instructional improvement purposes.” Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford researcher and a member of the Gordon Commission, clarifies, “They are for most states a step in the right direction, but they are limited and still in the US testing paradigm, which is different than you see in most countries: a sit-down test with lots of selected-response, multiple-choice questions, and a few open-ended questions . . . they are not as robust as the standards themselves call for and as some other countries do.” And the worst part is that these tests are still, by current law, intended to be high stakes. The high stakes becomes a real problem when you realize one more consequence of Common Core aligned assessments: the so-called assessment cliff. These tests are harder by any measure than the ones they’re replacing. Two states got a head start by giving Common Core– aligned assessments produced by Pearson. New York saw a 24 percentage point drop in ELA proficiency and a 33.8 point drop in math in the first year. In Kentucky the drop in both subjects was around 25 points. Willhoft says the score drop-off is just a reality check that schools and districts need to face, stating, “Thirty to forty percent of our public school graduates must take remedial courses when they get to college.” This number is in dispute: the National Center for Education Statistics, the government clearinghouse, lists the remediation rate for all first-year college students at 20 percent. But even if the real number is half what Willhoft quotes, it’s too much. Still, the predictive validity of the Common Core tests is not proven because they haven’t yet been given to large numbers of students or correlated with the long-term success of those students. Just because they are harder doesn’t prove that they align well with what students need to know or be able to do in college. More important, there is no evidence that the effects of high-stakes tests— more teaching to the test, more cheating, more closing of schools and firing of teachers— will indeed prepare more students to succeed in college. In fact, we can be pretty sure it won’t because that’s what we’ve been trying with little success since No Child Left Behind was passed twelve years ago. The Common Core poses another dilemma: these tests are in some ways even more standardized than the ones that came before them. Instead of fifty different curricular standards and fifty different tests in fifty states, there is just one set of standards and will potentially be just three or four Common Core tests in use across the country. On the one hand, using fewer tests makes comparisons between states more valid. If the same tests are given to millions of students, states won’t be able to play so many games with the definition of “proficiency.” Even if each state sets its own cut scores, as McGraw Hill’s Jeff Livingston and Pearson’s Doug Kubach say they do, it will be easy to compare scores across state lines. This may be one of the reasons why a dozen states backed out of the test consortia in the spring and summer of 2014. As of June 2014 only 42 percent of the nation’s students were set to take these tests the following spring; other states would either purchase Common Core tests from vendors like Pearson or hadn’t yet decided. At the same time, the greater alignment between curriculum and test as well as the smaller number of tests overall and school districts’ need to swiftly adopt brand-new curricula and tests at the same time creates a major business opportunity. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has spoken about the Common Core creating a unified “marketplace.” Companies like Pearson, Apple, Microsoft, and Google can sell the same tests, materials, curricula, and devices to schools nationwide. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (pp. 36-38). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition. The Common Core thus paves the way for education that is ever more test driven, that begins and ends with tests, where teaching to the test is the only option left because the textbook and the test were written and vetted by the same committees and published at the same time by the same company. Where did these things come from? How did they become the law of the land? And how can we do better? Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 38). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### Urban Over-Testing

#### Urban students are tested more

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

District-level testing occurs more frequently and takes up more learning time

in urban districts than in suburban districts. In grades K-2, urban students

spend about 52 percent more time on district tests than state tests. In grades 3-5

and 6-8, students in urban districts spend approximately 80 percent and 73 percent

more time, respectively, taking district-mandated standardized tests than

their suburban peers. But the difference is most profound among high school

students. Urban high school students spend 266 percent more time taking

district-level exams than their suburban counterparts.

### Undermines Education – Time Trade-Off

#### Students who take a lot of standardized tests spend less time on other creative projects

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

The focus on test prep eats up time that could be spent doing hands-on projects and collaborative, interactive activities. Neely-Randall told the HPR, “In the beginning, we were doing all of these great projects and they were fluent readers and writers … and then all of a sudden, I had to stop everything to get them ready for a test.” In fact, according to [a report](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf) published in 2013 by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), students in heavily tested grades can spend over 110 hours per year doing test prep, and as many as 50 hours per year taking the tests themselves, a total of roughly 15 percent of their instructional time.

#### Spending time on test prep undermines the quality of education in poor communities

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

The schools that have been forced to devote the most time to test prep are those in the most disadvantaged communities, because they have to achieve the biggest increases in test scores under NCLB’s mandates. Robert Schaeffer, the public education director at the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, explained in an interview with the HPR, “In those kinds of schools, the curriculum becomes test prep: doing worksheets and practice tests and getting ready for the big test.” [A report](http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf) from the Center for American Progress substantiates Schaeffer’s claim, demonstrating that urban high school students spend as much as 266 percent more time taking standardized tests than their suburban counterparts do.

This increased focus on test prep has had a profoundly negative impact on the quality of education many students receive. Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest teachers union in America, said in an interview with the HPR that the narrow focus on tested subjects causes students to become disengaged at school. “Most kids I know are so anxious about the high-stakes consequences of these tests right now that they hate school, but yet they can be really engaged if we engage them through music or through art or through projects.”

#### Because mat and science scores are values, schools devalue teaching of the humanities

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Because only math and reading test scores count towards a school’s “adequate yearly progress” under NCLB, schools have deemphasized, and in some cases completely stopped, teaching things like “social studies, literature, art, music, physical education, and other important topics where test scores do not result in judgments of school quality,” writes Richard Rothstein in his 2004 book *Class and Schools*. [A 2006 study](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/26/education/26child.html?pagewanted=all) by the Center on Education Policy supported this claim, finding that since NCLB was passed, 71 percent of school districts cut back on subjects like history and music so they could spend more time on the tested subjects.

#### Test prep trades-off with instructional time

Randi Weingarten , President, American Federation of Teachers , July 2013, Testing More, Teaching Less: What America’s Obsession with Student Tests Costs in Money and Loss Instructional Time,” <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Time spent on test preparation reduces instructional time by the same amount, giving rise to great con­cern among educators and parents. Test-preparation time has grown substantially with the expansion of state-mandated testing, the proliferation of interim/ benchmarking assessments and the expansion of high-stakes consequences attached to test scores.

### Undermines Creativity

#### Standardized educational systems undermine the creativity that makes the American system great

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Yong Zhao sees the decentralization and absence of standardization in American education as one of its strengths. He writes, “American education has many problems, but to paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, it is the worst form of education except for all others that have been tried. The decentralized system with local governance is a fundamentally sound framework that has evolved within the American context, that has led to America’s economic prosperity and scientific preeminence so far, and that is being studied and copied by others.” He worries that in our eagerness to copy nations with higher test scores, we may sacrifice the qualities of individualism and creativity that have been the source of our nation’s economic, social, and technological success. 13 Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1458-1459). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Yong Zhao writes that China wants to transform itself from “a labor-intensive, low-level manufacturing economy into an innovation-driven knowledge society.” Innovative people, he says, create an innovation-driven society. “Innovative people cannot come from schools that force students to memorize correct answers on standardized tests or reward students who excel at regurgitating spoon-fed knowledge.” He asks the obvious questions: “If China, a developing country aspiring to move into an innovative society, has been working to emulate U.S. education, why does America want to abandon it?” Why would Americans “allow the government to dictate what their children should learn, when they should learn it, and how they are evaluated”? Continuing to pursue this course of action, he warns, can do serious damage to American education because it demoralizes educators and at the same time “denies the real cause of education inequality— poverty, funding gaps, and psychological damages caused by racial discrimination— by placing all responsibilities on schools and teachers.”

The Chinese public “seems eager to embrace what is viewed as a more liberal and creative system.” Zhao quotes a Chinese journalist who was a visiting scholar in Arizona in the 1990s. The journalist admired American education because it had “no uniform textbooks, no standardized tests, no ranking of students, this is American education.” The journalist’s ten-year-old son attended an American school, and the father was impressed: American classrooms don’t impart a massive amount of knowledge into their children, but they try every way to draw children’s eyes to the boundless ocean of knowledge outside the school; they do not force their children to memorize all the formulae and theorems, but they work tirelessly to teach children how to think and ways to seek answers to new questions; they never rank students according to test scores, but they try every way to affirm children’s efforts, praise their thoughts, and protect and encourage children’s desire and effort. 15 Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1476-1477). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Zhao observed that “what the Chinese found valuable in American education is the result of a decentralized, autonomous system that does not have standards, uses multiple criteria for judging the value of talents, and celebrates individual differences.” Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1478-1480). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

The attitudes and skills that Wadhwa admires are the very ones that are sacrificed by the intensive focus on standardized testing that has been foisted on American schools by federal policies like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. Keith Baker, who worked for many years as an analyst at the U.S. Department of Education, asked, “Are international tests worth anything?” Do they predict the future of a nation’s economy? He reviewed the evidence and concluded that for the United States and about a dozen of the world’s most advanced nations, “standings in the league tables of international tests are worthless. There is no association between test scores and national success, and, contrary to one of the major beliefs driving U.S. education policy for nearly half a century, international test scores are nothing to be concerned about. America’s schools are doing just fine on the world scene.” 17 Baker argued that the purveyors of doom and gloom were committing the “ecological correlation fallacy.” It is a fallacy to generalize that what is good for an individual (a higher test score, for example) must be right for the nation as a whole. Maybe it is, maybe it isn’t, he said, but evidence, not just an assumption, is required to make the case. To test the predictive value of the international assessments, he used the results of the First International Mathematics Study, given in 1964 to thirteen-year-olds in twelve nations. Students in the United States placed next to last, ahead of Sweden. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1494-1500). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### Alienates Students

#### Standardized tests alienate kids from school and turn parents into test preppers

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

3. They are making students hate school and turning parents into preppers. “The tests are boring!” complains Jorge, a sixth-grade student at Leaf. “You don’t really want to sit in a chair for three hours. There’s no breaks. You can’t stand up and stretch, go to the bathroom, get a tissue, get a drink of water. It makes us really stressed, so we don’t do as well.” A little bit of stress can be healthy and motivational. Too much or the wrong kind can be damaging and toxic. When you put teachers’ and principals’ jobs on the line and turn up the heat on parents, students catch the anxiety like a bug. Claire Walpole, a Chicago parent, blogged about her experiences assisting her daughter’s class with computer-based testing. Her daughter broke down on the way home on the second day. “‘ I just can’t do this,’ she sobbed. “The ill-fitting headsets, the hard-to-hear instructions, the uncooperative mouse, the screen going to command modes, not being able to get clarification when she asked for it. . . . It took just two days of standardized testing for her to doubt herself. . . . ‘I’m just not smart, Mom. Not like everyone else. I’m just no good at kindergarten, just no good at all.’” Especially in the elementary grades, teachers and parents across the country report students throwing up, staying home with stomachaches, locking themselves in the bathroom, crying, having nightmares, and otherwise acting out on test days. As a first- and second-grade teacher, giving mandated state tests, educational consultant Sara Truebridge said, “I never gave a test where I didn’t have one child totally melt down. Just crying. These are second graders. They can’t do it, they’re nervous, they’re tired, they’re showing tics, they’re not sleeping. And these may be the most gifted kids in the room.” Research dating back to the 1950s has shown that 25 to 40 percent of students suffer anxiety significant enough to depress test performance and that these anxious students perform 12 percent worse on average. The current thinking is that anxiety distracts people from the task at hand, as their minds are focused on negative thoughts about shortcomings and their imminent failure, and that this negative self-talk also interferes with working memory. All of these effects undermine the reliability of standardized tests to discern students’ true competence. And as the tests draw more and more focus, they destroy students’ enjoyment of school. The anxiety doesn’t end when students go home. The pressure of high-stakes tests is driving parents to act against their own values. “Parenthood, like war, is a state in which it’s impossible to be moral,” wrote Lisa Miller in New York Magazine in 2013 in an article in which she describes sending a fourth grader to school with head lice so she could take the state-mandated English exam to get into competitive middle schools. From striving immigrants to the very wealthy, it’s becoming more commonplace for families across the country to spend thousands of dollars annually to help their kids prepare for the standardized tests that will get them into public gifted kindergartens, private schools, competitive middle schools and high schools, and, of course, college. Since the 1970s, among affluent families the total amount spent on out-of-school enrichment has grown from $ 3,500 a year to $ 8,900 a year, both in 2012 dollars. For working-class parents whose kids are more likely to be labeled failing, school-mandated tutoring, afterschool programs, and Saturday and summer school sessions crowd out limited time and resources for extracurriculars or other enrichment. “She goes in the morning to the extra tutoring before school, she stays after school, she’s pulled out during class,” says Rosendo Soto, a firefighter in Texas, whose middle child is struggling with the tests. “We’re on spring break now, I’m working intensively with her every day on math and writing expository stories and personal narratives. It’s all geared toward these tests, tests, tests. She’s nervous, fearful, and I have to remind her every day it’s just school. I feel like we’re sending her to be tortured.” The money parents spend on preparing kids for tests dwarfs what schools are spending to give them. The total test preparation, tutoring, and counseling market in the United States was estimated at $ 13.1 billion by 2015, and the global private tutoring market was estimated to pass a whopping $ 78.2 billion. That counts the companies like Kaplan, Princeton Review, and Grockit that hold classes, sell books, and offer online services, and the national and international chains like Kumon, Sylvan Learning, and Huntington Learning Center that accept kids as young as eighteen months old for pre-academic and after-school drilling and prepping. That estimate also includes money spent on private tutors, who can charge anywhere from $ 45 to $ 1,000 an hour, and independently operated “Saturday schools” or “cram schools” that are expanding from their traditional Chinese-, Korean-, and Russian-speaking immigrant roots to attract more and more mainstream American families. What these dollar figures don’t convey is the time, anxiety, and opportunity cost that come along with them. Instead of giving them time to pursue a creative passion, a sport, play outside, or just be together as a family, millions of stressed-out parents are frog-marching their kids through hours of the most boring kind of studying on top of the time they spend in school. No matter how much you want to convey to your children the spirit of fair play, the joy of learning for its own sake, the belief that they are more than a score on a piece of paper, sending them to test prep is an action that speaks far louder than words. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (pp. 19-20). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### Alienates Kids

#### Standardized testing alienates teachers from teaching

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

4. They are making teachers hate teaching. I want my child taught by proud, well-paid, highly engaged professionals. But high-stakes standardized tests deprofessionalize teaching because they give outside authorities the final say on how teachers should do their jobs. The testing company determines the quality of teachers’ performance. In judging students’ progress, the law gives test scores more weight than the observations of people who spend time with the kids every day. Possibly the most politically charged application of standardized testing is the rapid growth in the use of these tests in teacher evaluation. Teachers used to be evaluated solely by their supervisors, and the vast majority historically got satisfactory ratings regardless of how well the school or their students were doing. Race to the Top, a 2009 Department of Education initiative under President Obama, instead rewarded states for evaluating teachers based on student test scores in the hope that this would be more objective. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, from 2009 to 2012 thirty-six states and the District of Columbia have changed the rules for teacher evaluation. Thirty states now require these evaluations to include “objective measures of student achievement,” which in practice nearly always means test scores. Eighteen states and the District of Columbia actually base tenure decisions on the test scores of a teacher’s students. How do you judge a teacher based on their student’s test scores? Not very well. Obviously you can’t take a teacher whose students are the children of Hispanic migrant workers and simply compare their test scores to those of the teacher teaching the rich kids up the hill to figure out who is a better teacher. Value-added measurements were thus concocted. These take students’ scores one year and their scores the next year (or, sometimes, their scores on the same test repeated in the fall and the spring) and compare them to a model that predicts how much they should have grown over that time period. The teachers’ “value add” is how much the student actually gains compared to what was predicted. There are a lot of holes in this approach. There is no value-added data at all on kindergartners through third graders, in the years before official testing begins, although some states have added yet more tests to rectify this problem. Should physical education, art, science, and social studies teachers be evaluated based on their students’ math and reading skills? What about students who transfer into a class midyear? What about team teachers? What about specialists? What about students who are often absent? What if tests and/ or cutoff scores change and test results drop district-wide as a result? In a 2011 paper, “Getting Teacher Evaluation Right,” the Stanford researcher Linda Darling-Hammond and three other education researchers concluded that value-added measurements should only be used alongside other means of evaluation and in a low-stakes way. Their research showed that ratings for individual teachers were highly unstable, varying from year to year and from one test to another. A vivid example of the instability of value-added formulas is the story of Carolyn Abbott, the “worst” eighth-grade math teacher in New York City. Abbott taught math to both seventh and eighth graders at the Anderson School, a public school in Manhattan that pulls students from all over the city for its gifted and talented program. Her seventh-grade students performed in the 98th percentile on the 2009 state test. Based on their high scores, the value-added model predicted that these students would perform at or above the 97th percentile the following year. But in 2010 Abbott taught this exact same class of students, now in the eighth grade. By this time these students were far ahead of the material covered on the state test, which they had learned in fifth grade at Anderson. They were preparing instead for a much tougher, high school– level Regents Exam in algebra and were busy applying to high schools. “The eighth-graders don’t care; they rush through the exam, and they don’t check their work,” Abbott told the Washington Post. “The test has no effect on them. I can’t make an argument that it counts for kids. The seventh-graders, they care a bit more.” So her eighth graders, who had been 98th-percentile performers as seventh graders the year before, slacked their way to “only” the 89th percentile in 2010. The value-added formula blamed Abbott for the relatively large drop in scores, thus anointing her the worst eighth-grade math teacher in New York. New York City’s Department of Education, over the objection of the teachers’ union, released its Teacher Data Report to major media outlets, and Abbott’s name and rank were published far and wide. Abbott had the support of her administration and her students’ parents, but the experience was so “humiliating” that she left teaching for a PhD program in mathematics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “It’s too hard to be a teacher in New York City,” she told one blogger. “Everything is stacked against you. You can’t just measure what teachers do and slap a number on it.” “Teachers are demoralized and feel very powerless” because of test-driven accountability, said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of the two national unions. “Large numbers of teachers are retiring. The attrition rate in big cities is around 50 percent,” up to a high of 70 percent after five years in Washington, DC. The 2012 annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher showed that the percentage of teachers who are “very satisfied” with their jobs had sunk to 39 percent, its lowest point since 1987. Half of teachers said they felt very stressed. Only a fifth to a quarter of teachers in other surveys express faith that tests are accurate reflections of their students’ learning. “These are pretty shoddy tests,” said Weingarten. “When everything becomes about data and testing, it wholly controverts the purposes of education.” Teachers are taking to YouTube, blogs, Tumblr, and Twitter to describe just how demoralizing standardized tests are to them personally. A veteran fourth-grade teacher in Florida resigned in May 2013 via YouTube. “I have experienced the depressing gradual downfall and misdirection of education that has slowly eaten away at my love of teaching,” she said in her video. Curtains blow gently in the breeze behind her; her face is haggard. “Raising students’ test scores on standardized tests is now the only goal. . . . Everything I loved about teaching is extinct.” The video has over 600,000 views. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 23). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### Hurts Lower-Skilled Students

#### Lower skill students spend even more time on test prep rather than learning

Sophie Quinton, January 23, 2015, National Journal, Is Standardized Testing a Civil Rights Issue?, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/education/Is-Standardized-Testing-Civil-Rights-Issue> DOA: 10-26-15

But many edu­cat­ors say that the cur­rent tests used to meas­ure stu­dent pro­gress—and hold schools and teach­ers ac­count­able—don’t meas­ure learn­ing well. “Stand­ard­ized tests meas­ure the wrong things,” Steph­en Laz­ar, a teach­er at Har­vest Col­legi­ate High School, told the packed hear­ing room. They meas­ure mind­less re­pe­ti­tion of facts, he said.

Pres­sure to raise stu­dent test scores can turn classes in­to cram­ming ses­sions. Laz­ar said he spends the en­tire month of May train­ing his stu­dents to pass the Re­gents, New York state ex­ams. “The learn­ing and op­por­tun­ity gap widens” when stu­dents with low scores spend so much time on test prep, while stu­dents with high scores can take on more com­plex as­sign­ments, he said.

### Hurts Minorities

#### Low scores leave minorities in disadvantageous educational programs

FairTest – National Organization for Fair and Open Testing, Racial Justice and Standardized Educational Testing, <http://fairtest.org/sites/default/files/racial_justice_and_testing_12-10.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Young people of color, particularly those from low-income families, have suffered the most as the explosion of high-stakes standardized testing in U.S. public education has undermined equity and school quality. Positive assessment alternatives that will help these students and their schools do exist. They must be fought for and won in the policy arena.

Decades of research demonstrate that African American, Latino and Native American students, as well as students from some Asian groups, experience the following problems with high-stakes testing, from early childhood through college entrance:

 \_They disproportionately fail state or local high school graduation exams. Those tests provide no social or educational benefit. They do not improve college or employment readiness. Not having a diploma leads to higher rates of unemployment and imprisonment and lower rates of forming stable families.ii

 \_Students in these groups are more likely to be held back in grade because of low test scores. Grade retention produces no long-term academic benefits; it undermines self-esteem and doubles the likelihood of dropping out. Boys are subject to this damage more often than are girls.iii

 \_Because, on average, students of color score lower on college admissions tests (SAT and ACT), many capable youth are denied entrance or access to so-called "merit" scholarships, contributing to the huge racial gap in college enrollments and completion.iv

 \_Schools at times suspend, expel, "counsel out" or otherwise remove students with low scores in order to boost school results and escape test-based sanctions mandated by the federal government's "No Child Left Behind" law, at great cost to the youth and ultimately society.v

 \_As Claude Steele and his colleagues have demonstrated, "stereotype threat" increases the likelihood that students of color will have inaccurately low scores. Stereotype threat means that students who are aware of racial and gender stereotypes about their group’s intellectual ability score lower on standardized tests perceived to measure academic aptitude. In effect, the use of high-stakes testing in an overall environment of racial inequality perpetuates that inequality through the emotional and psychological power of the tests over the test-takers.vi

 \_High stakes testing causes additional damage to the many students of color who are English language learners. The tests are often inaccurate for ELLs, leading to misplacement or retention. ELLs are, alongside students with disabilities, those least likely to pass graduation tests.vii

 \_African Americans, especially boys, are disproportionately placed or misplaced in special education, frequently based on test results. These programs often fail to fully educate themviii

#### Tests just rank students along economic and racial lines, increasing inequalities

Rethinking Schools, Spring 1999, <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/13_03/edit133.shtml> DOA 10-26-15

Rather than grappling with these issues, too many politicians have seized on a simplistic formula for reform: more standardized tests, especially "high stakes" tests. Nationwide, states and school districts are forcing a growing number of children to take "high stakes" standardized tests and, on the basis of test scores, children may be retained, denied access to a preferred high school, or, in some cases, even refused a high school diploma. That's not public accountability, it's discrimination.

Dating back to the development of IQ tests at the turn of the century, standardized tests have been used to sort and rank children, most reprehensibly along racial and class lines, and to rationalize giving more privileges to the already privileged. Indeed the first standardized tests were developed by eugenicists anxious for "scientific" data to prove their theories of biological determinism.

#### Standardized testing penalizes diversity

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the major testing law, was intended to “close the achievement gap.” It sought to hold schools accountable, not just for results averaged over all students, but also for the performance of each historically lower-performing group of students: the poor, African Americans, Hispanics, English language learners, and those with a learning disability. The unintended consequence of that laudable intention is that the more of these subgroups a school has, the more chances it has to fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. In other words, schools that serve the poor and ethnic minorities are more likely to fail NCLB tests and be punished or closed. The number of so-called turnaround schools spiked from around one thousand a year in the mid-2000s to a peak of six thousand in 2010– 2011. The number of schools shut down has been more volatile, but it has risen from around one thousand a year in the early 2000s to between fifteen hundred and two thousand a year in the late 2000s. School reorganizations, granted, sometimes bring improvement, but in all cases they disrupt communities, and this is why they have sparked protests from Detroit to Newark to Chicago to Houston to Baltimore. Leaders of diverse schools have two rational responses to this situation. The hard way is to redouble efforts to ensure the success of at-risk subgroups of students. The easy way is to cheat on the tests, or to somehow get rid of those subgroups. The case of Lorenzo Garcia, the superintendent of the El Paso Independent School District, shows the lengths that some school leaders are willing to go in response to high-stakes testing policies— far beyond cheating, to actually interfering with the educations of hundreds of students in order to manipulate the statistics. Garcia collected $ 56,000 in bonuses for the outstanding improvement in scores posted by his overwhelmingly low-income, immigrant, Hispanic student population on the Texas tenth-grade test. Over his six-year tenure from 2004 to 2010, as a federal court found, Garcia achieved this improvement in scores by systematically targeting lower-achieving students and stopping them from taking the tests. He and his coconspirators used a wide variety of methods. Students would be transferred to charter schools. Older students arriving from Mexico, many of whom were fleeing the drug wars in nearby Ciudad Juárez, were incorrectly placed in ninth grade. Credits were deleted from transcripts or grades changed to move students forward or back a grade in order to keep them out of the tenth-grade test. Because of the manipulation, enrollment at some high schools dropped 40 or 50 percent between ninth and tenth grades. Those intentionally held back were sometimes allowed to catch up before graduation through “turbo-mesters,” “earning” a semester’s worth of credits in a few hours on the computer. Sometimes truant officers would visit students at home and warn them not to come to school on test days. And sometimes students were openly encouraged to drop out. El Paso citizens called their lost students “los desaparecidos,” or the disappeared. Linda Hernandez-Romero’s daughter was one of those held back in the ninth grade. She dropped out of high school and had three children by the age of twenty-one. Hernandez-Romero told reporters, “She always tells me: ‘Mom, I got kicked out of school because I wasn’t smart. I guess I’m not, Mom, look at me.’ There’s not a way of expressing how bad it feels, because it’s so bad. Seeing one of your children fail and knowing that it was not all her doing is worse.” Rick Perry’s Texas Education Agency found Garcia innocent of these allegations, but a federal prosecution resulted in $ 236,500 in fines and a forty-two-month prison sentence for Garcia. Garcia’s case is exceptional because it resulted in jail time. But this kind of systematic discrimination in response to high-stakes testing has been documented in at least three states for over a decade, as discussed in Chapter 3. Not only do they motivate blatant discrimination, but high-stakes standardized tests also interfere with educators’ ability to meet individual learning needs. Overall, 13 percent of schoolchildren are now labeled LD, for learning disabled. Under a high-stakes system both parents and schools have good reasons to push for an official diagnosis for any student who has trouble sitting perfectly still for ninety minutes every day for three weeks at a stretch. The diagnosis means extra time to take the tests, modifications, extra help, and resources. For schools, if more kids with mild learning differences end up slotted into the LD category, statistics dictate that scores will rise in both the general and LD groups. But the long-term consequences of aggressively sorting, stigmatizing, and medicating kids are unknown. In particular, the number of kids on medication for attention disorders like ADD and ADHD has risen from 600,000 in 1990 to 3.5 million in 2013. Leading doctors who study this disorder have called the trends a “national disaster”— not a medical epidemic but rather one of overzealous treatment driven by a profit-seeking pharmaceutical industry. The good test-takers are getting shortchanged too. Traditional standardized tests provide the most accurate information on students toward the middle of the intellectual bell curve. If a child either “hits the ceiling” with a perfect score or bottoms out on the test, her score will tell teachers very little about which areas she needs to work on. Not surprisingly, there is evidence that in the most test-driven school settings students who score well above or well below proficient get less individualized attention because teachers instead work intensively with the students who are just below proficient, or “on the bubble.” Promoting a single standard of proficiency for every child may be efficient for policymakers, but it flies in the face of current educational theory, which celebrates the individual learning path of each child. Allison Keil is the codirector of the highly popular Community Roots Charter School in New York City. Each class in her school is team taught and includes gifted, mainstream, and special needs students working together. She calls the tests distracting, demoralizing, and confusing for many of her students and their families. “A child with an IEP [individualized education plan, e.g., those with a learning disability] has specific goals. She may be working incredibly hard all year, meeting the promotional criteria that she and her teacher have set together, and then she gets a 1 (below proficient) on the test and feels like a failure. It’s a huge disservice to the progress she’s made.” Rebecca Ellis expresses the identical frustration. She is a single mother of a nine-year-old autistic boy named Jackson in Mandeville, Louisiana, north of New Orleans. I met them through a mutual friend at the raucous sidelines of a Mardi Gras parade; her younger, typically developing son was up on a ladder, trying to catch beads from passing floats, while Jackson ignored the racket, playing with a small plastic puzzle. “I know today, in 2014, that Jackson is never going to pass one of these standardized assessments,” she tells me. “He took the Iowa test last year and scored in the second percentile.” It frustrates her that there is no official recognition of the real progress he is making, such as in interacting with other children, because there is no room for nuance in the standards. Rather than help him achieve his social development goals, the school’s resources are diverted toward drilling him on math and reading concepts that are far out of his ken. Standardization is the enemy of diversity. In our high-tech era, what humans have to offer is not robotic sameness but rather variation, adaptability, and flexibility. Rating students as 1, 2, 3, or 4 in a few limited skills does nothing to promote, support, or recognize that human value or individual potential. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 26). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### Hurts Poor & Minorities

#### Minorities and poor kids testing more, further undermining instruction

Stevenson is a school librarian in Austin, November 1, 2015, The Statesman, Stevenson: Obama’s Retreat on No Child Left Behind is Long Overdue, <http://www.statesman.com/news/news/opinion/stevenson-obamas-retreat-on-no-child-left-behind-i/npBj7/> DOA: 11-1-15

Sadly, test-score pressures turn Austin into a tale of two schools. Children in high poverty schools are put on a much stricter diet of test prep than wealthier schools on the west side of town. In elementary schools, the lower-income students often receive less science and social studies instruction than their peers on the west side because these subjects are not tested until eighth grade. They enjoy fewer experiential learning opportunities than their peers on the west side, though more field trips and hands-on learning activities are just what they need. There are some notable exceptions, such as Blackshear Elementary, which through its emphasis on the fine arts has achieved status as a national Blue Ribbon school.

### Student Morale

#### Few students pass, devastating morale

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

Even more disturbing, these tests were made so difficult in 2013 that [only 31 percent](http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/25/opinion/ravitch-common-core-standards/index.html" \t "_hplink) of New York students passed them, and in 2015 an as-of-yet [undisclosed percentage](http://thenotebook.org/blog/158797/pa-test-scores-dropped-precipitously-2015-because-added-rigor" \t "_hplink) of Pennsylvania students! The [difficulty](http://educationopportunitynetwork.org/whos-really-failing-students/" \t "_hplink) of these tests can only be explained as a punitive measure that devastates [student morale](http://www.alternet.org/education/7-religious-reasons-im-not-letting-my-kids-take-standardized-tests" \t "_hplink), reinforces the narrative of "failed" public schools, undermines America's confidence in them, and provides [governors](http://www.edlawcenter.org/news/archives/other-issues/what-do-we-know-about-the-charter-chains-that-will-educate-camden-children.html" \t "_hplink) with the pretext for closing those which "do poorly" and replacing them with charters.

### Time Trades-Off

#### Students now spending 25% of the year on test prep and test taking

Drake Baer, May 15, 2015, Business Insider, <http://www.businessinsider.com/anya-kamenetz-the-test-interview-2015-5>, How Standardized Tests like the SAT have poisoned America’s classrooms, DOA: 10-26-15

In ["The Test: Why Our Schools Are Obsessed with Standardized Testing — But You Don't Have To Be,"](http://www.amazon.com/The-Test-Schools-Obsessed-Standardized/dp/1610394410?tag=bisafetynet-20" \t "_blank) veteran education reporter Anya Kamenetz investigates the [$2 billion dollar](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/30/report-big-education-firms-spend-millions-lobbying-for-pro-testing-policies/) standardized test industry.  Testing is thoroughly entrenched in the American education system. Students in grades three through 10 spend up to 25% of the year engaged in test prep instead of actually learning, she reports

#### The trade-off undermines the traditional curriculum

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

Standardized testing [undermines](http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/" \t "_hplink) the very education it is designed to improve. Teachers spend so much time on prepping for tests and administering them that the [traditional curriculum](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/04/25/1379800/-Teacher-explains-how-standardized-testing-is-hurting-her-first-graders" \t "_hplink) no longer exists. Science, history, civics, world languages, music, and art are no longer taught because of the inordinate emphasis upon reading and math. Education today is simply testing and test preparation!

#### Standardized tests waste time and money

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

2. Tests waste time and money. Not only do standardized tests address only a fraction of what students need to learn, but we’re also spending ages doing it. At schools like Leaf, time given to standardized tests is more than the weeks spent taking the tests; it also includes practice tests, field tests, prep days, Saturday school, workbooks for homework. It includes afternoon periods full of movies for kids “burnt” from the tests. And standardized tests are not just state-mandated accountability tests. There are independent national assessments like Iowa Basic Skills Tests and the “Nation’s Report Card,” international tests like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), diagnostic tests such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), supplementary subject tests in social studies and science, and local benchmark tests so districts can predict how their students will do on the state tests. In the later grades, of course, come the SAT and ACT and their accompanying practice and prequel tests, now starting as soon as seventh grade. Reports from across the country suggest that students spend about three days taking state tests in each of grades three through ten but up to 25 percent of the school year engaged in testing and test prep. By the time a student graduates high school that could translate to 585 school days— three and a quarter extra school years that they could have spent learning instead of being tested on what they already knew or, worse, didn’t know. At the outer limits, in the Pittsburgh Public Schools in the 2013– 2014 school year, students in kindergarten through twelfth grade took a total of more than 270 tests required by the state or district. The most tested grade was fourth, with 33 required tests, just shy of one a week on average. These included the state Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests in math, reading, and science, for teacher evaluations; a three-part reading test; the DIBELS Next three-part reading tests; plus twenty more benchmark reading tests and four benchmark math tests created by district staff. Ongoing and frequent assessment is part of good educational practice. Good teachers give lots of formative feedback— steady little nudges that let students know how they’re progressing. But they draw on a full palette of assessment to do that: calling on the class during a lecture, pop quizzes, sending students up to the board to solve homework problems, daily journal entries, lab reports, peer evaluations and group critiques, research papers, presentations, and final exams. Standardized tests, however, restrict the palette to black and white. They aren’t in teachers’ control, so they aren’t integrated into teaching and learning in the same way that formative feedback is. Often the more a kid is struggling in school, the more time she spends taking standardized tests. Response to intervention (RTI) is a heavily assessment-driven approach to schooling that’s being used to some extent in 60 to 70 percent of schools. Assessment is “at the front end” of RTI, said Louis Danielson, who was in the Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs from 1976 until 2008. With RTI, “Assessment,” he said, “plays a key role in decision-making. You’re screening to identify at-risk kids.” Under RTI, at the beginning of first grade every student takes a reading test. Those who score at the low end are assessed every other week to determine whether they’re making sufficient progress. If they aren’t, after six to eight weeks they’ll be eligible for more targeted interventions, like tutoring or small-group work. The testing continues, up to once or twice a week. Richard Halverson, a professional of educational leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies how technologies change schools, calls RTI “a national effort to make special ed into all of school— so all kids get assessed, all get learning plans and the kids who struggle get assessed even more. It’s the enshrinement of pervasive assessment as the model of education.” Pervasive assessment is a nightmare version of school for most students. It’s like burning thirsty plants in a garden under a magnifying glass, in the hope that they will grow faster under scrutiny. That’s the time factor. What about money? Are we spending too much on these tests, most of which goes to a handful of private companies? A 2012 report by the Brookings Institution found $ 669 million in direct annual spending on assessments in forty-five states, or $ 27 per student. But that’s just the beginning. The cost rises up to an estimated $ 1,100 when you add in the logistical and administrative overhead (e.g., the extra cost of paying teachers to prep for, administer, and grade the tests) plus the instructional time lost. Leaf, for example, employs a full-time testing coordinator, though it has fewer than two hundred students. According to a 2006 analysis by Bloomberg Markets, over 60 percent of the test companies’ revenue comes from prep materials, not the tests themselves. The profit margins on No Child Left Behind tests are as low as 3 percent, but practice tests and workbooks are more cheaply produced and claim as high as a 21 percent profit margin. Many informed observers say we’d do better to have more expensive tests and fewer of them. “The reliance on multiple choice tests is a very American obsession,” said Dylan Wiliam, an expert on the use of assessments that improve classroom practice. “We think nothing of spending $ 300– $ 400 on examining kids at the end of high school in England.” It’s a case of penny wise and pound foolish, critics like Wiliam say: you waste billions of dollars and untold hours by distorting the entire enterprise of school, preparing students to take crummy multiple-choice tests that cost only twenty-five bucks to grade. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 17). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

#### Students lose two weeks of instructional time taking standardized tests

VNews, November 1, 2015, Editorial: Testing the Limits, <http://www.vnews.com/news/newsletter/19208686-95/editorial-testing-the-limits> DOA: 10-1-15

Even so, the official acknowledgment that more testing has resulted in less teaching is welcome. According to an analysis by the American Federation of Teachers, students in two mid-size urban school districts spent up to 50 hours a year, or the equivalent of about two full school weeks, taking mandated tests. Preparing for those tests took twice as long, meaning that teachers lost a lot of instructional time. Tests should advance learning, not detract from it.

### Cost Trades-Off with Instructional Resources

#### Testing trades-off with money that could be spent on instructional resources

Randi Weingarten , President, American Federation of Teachers , July 2013, Testing More, Teaching Less: What America’s Obsession with Student Tests Costs in Money and Loss Instructional Time,” <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Based on a detailed grade-by-grade analysis of the testing calendars for two mid-size urban school districts, and the applied research from other studies of state mandated testing, our study found that the time students spend taking tests ranged from 20 to 50 hours per year in heavily tested grades. In addition, students can spend 60 to more than 110 hours per year in test prep in high-stakes testing grades. Including the cost of lost instructional time (at $6.15 per hour, equivalent to the per-student cost of adding one hour to the school day), the estimated annual testing cost per pupil ranged from $700 to more than $1,000 per pupil in several grades that had the most testing. If testing were abandoned altogether, one school district in this study could add from 20 to 40 minutes of instruction to each school day for most grades. The other school district would be able to add almost an entire class period to the school day for grades 6-11. Additionally, in most grades, more than $100 per test-taker could be reallocated to purchase instructional programs, technology or to buy better tests. Cutting testing time and costs in half still would yield significant gains to the instructional day, and free up enough dollars in the budget that could fund tests that are better aligned to the standards and produce useful information for teachers, students and parents.

#### Better to spend the billions we spend on tests on education

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

The only winners in this multi-billion-dollar marketing scam are the test-making giants [Pearson Publishing Co.](http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/pearson-education-115026.html" \t "_hplink), [McGraw Hill et al.](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/schools/testing/companies.html" \t "_hplink), and educational consultants and vendors, whose coffers have been fattened by billions in tax revenue intended for children. Pearson and Co. and its Sales Rep Extraordinaire, [Education Secretary Arne Duncan](http://www.salon.com/2015/07/09/diane_ravitchs_devastating_arne_duncan_critique_the_education_secretary_earned_his_f/" \t "_hplink), are breaking the law by dictating what is taught in American classrooms.

These billions should be going to schools to hire more teachers so that students can have individual attention in smaller classes; hire school nurses, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, and librarians to deal with students' physical, emotional, family, and intellectual needs; offer richer, more varied, and well-rounded academic programs; and make needed repairs to school buildings.

#### Progressive curriculum gets pushed out

Rethinking Schools, Spring 1999, <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/13_03/edit133.shtml> DOA 10-26-15

Problems with standardized tests go beyond their "high stakes" use. Standardized tests can also drive curriculum and instruction in ways that harm children. Teachers are subjected to increasing pressures to prepare students for the tests, even when we know that the tests don't assess the most essential aspects of thinking and learning. Students often internalize the judgements of the tests -- as if test scores were the final word on one's knowledge or potential.

In addition, standardized tests come packaged with demands for more standardized curriculum -- again, wrapped in the rhetoric of "standards." These calls do not take place in a political and cultural vacuum. They are part of a broader movement to promote a narrow version of patriotism and "family values," and to silence the critical voices of feminists, environmentalists, labor activists, and advocates of racial justice. It is also worth noting that when the right wing pushes voucher schools or charter schools, they often want these exempted from statewide high-stakes tests, so that the schools can be free to pursue their entrepreneurial "creativity."

### Commodification

#### Test scores commodify education, making scores buyallbe and sellable

Sarah Jaffee, January 4, 2012, Standardized Tests Hurt Kids and Public Schools, Alternet, <http://www.alternet.org/story/153654/standardized_tests_hurt_kids_and_public_schools:_teachers,_parents_take_a_stand_against_corporate-backed_test_regime> DOA: 10-26-15

Jonathan Keiler, a Maryland teacher writing at[*Education Week*](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/05/13keiler.31.html?tkn=RSMFbO3U0EkfLLadfVDFV/g9iJh+jjCZjFgu&cmp=clp-edweek%20%20), explained the way test scores became a commodity—and create incentives for cheating or gaming the system along the way.

Value-added evaluations [in other words, pay increases related to high test scores] both directly and indirectly monetize student performance, and because money is a basic commodity, the process then turns student scores into a commodity. Of course, that performance is not monetized for the students; it is monetized for the teachers and administrators. By making student scores the basis for evaluation, the students and their scores create a market for the teachers and administrators whose livelihoods depend upon the results.

We are rewarding teachers for turning out kids with good test scores, even if they are not necessarily well educated.

When student scores become like orange juice, pork bellies, or yen, the people with the greatest incentive to cheat are the weakest teachers and administrators.

Where could this lead? Schools could become little more than test-preparation institutes, ignoring subjects and skills that are not assessed, with faculty members who resent and distrust one another. Meanwhile, many honest and dutiful teachers will go down in flames.

Cheating scandals have already erupted. In one notable case, in schools that [Michelle Rhee,](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/03/29/michelle-rhees-cheating-scandal-diane-ravitch-blasts-education-reform-star.html) education reform darling and former Washington, DC schools chancellor, held up as a model of her brand of education.

[Jeff Bryant at Campaign for America's Future](http://www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/2011125014/what-happens-when-edu-bubble-bursts%20%20) said that by making test scores the primary measure of school accountability, the education reform crowd could link every financial aspect of schools to test scores -- from teacher salaries to federal funds. He wrote, “[S]tandardized test scores are now the 'currency' of education that enables all sorts of resource swaps that would have been unthinkable 20 years ago, including charter schools for traditional public schools, online learning for face-to-face teaching, and experienced, tenured teachers for Teach for America amateurs.”

Hirschmann said one of the purposes of the testing regime is to “deprofessionalize the profession of teaching.” Parents tend to trust teachers, but now, she said, “The teacher can't even teach to the child anymore because it's not child-centered, it's test-centered. Everyone's talking about what they can do, what they can bring in, what they can buy to raise the test scores.”

What they can buy, often, seems to be the point.

Robertson pointed out that the American Legislative Exchange Council ([ALEC](http://www.thenation.com/article/161978/alec-exposed)), the right-wing policy network that cranks out model legislation for the states (now with help from the [Gates Foundation](http://crooksandliars.com/karoli/gates-foundation-grants-alec-hefty-sum-educ)) has been deeply involved in pushing testing and “merit pay” in schools. She noted that the profit motive has snuck into even the passing of national standards for teaching materials. “They've got the common core standards, now they can say these are the textbooks you need, the test prep, we're going to roll out the state test for you.”

Abby Rapoport at the [*Texas Observer*](http://www.texasobserver.org/cover-story/the-pearson-graduate)reported that federal law requires states to use standardized tests, but doesn't specify which test, so testing companies compete for fat contracts to do the state's testing. [Back in 2005](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2005/04/18_olsond_testingagain/), Questar, one of 17 companies at the time that created, printed and scored standardized tests, did approximately $2.2 billion in business a year. And testing has only increased since then.

Meanwhile, the same testing companies administer state tests also sell textbooks, test prep materials and much more. Rapoport wrote:

From textbooks to data management, professional development programs to testing systems, Pearson has it all—and all of it has a price. For statewide testing in Texas alone, the company holds a five-year contract worth nearly $500 million to create and administer exams. If students should fail those tests, Pearson offers a series of remedial-learning products to help them pass. Meanwhile, kids are likely to use textbooks from Pearson-owned publishing houses like Prentice Hall and Pearson Longman. Students who want to take virtual classes may well find themselves in a course subcontracted to Pearson. And if the student drops out, Pearson partners with the American Council on Education to offer the GED exam for a profit.

“There's a huge amount of money to be made off of children who have to take high-stakes tests,” Hirschmann noted, and so the testing companies think nothing of spending a bit on politicians. “Pearson has been [offering trips](http://www.nytimes.com/schoolbook/2011/12/22/state-is-investigating-pearson-foundation-trips/); David Steiner, the former [New York state] commissioner of education, went on one of these junkets and Pearson has the contract.”

Meanwhile in Texas, Rapoport reported that in the most recent legislative session, an unprecedented $5 billion was hacked from the public education budget. “Despite the cuts,” she noted, “Pearson’s funding streams remain largely intact.”

### Implementation Problems

#### Many structural implementation problems with the tests

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

One thing it seems standardized tests are exceptionally good at measuring is socioeconomic status. In *Class and Schools*, Rothstein argues that this is because wealthier students have parents who can spend more time with them and more money on enrichment programs for them. He also writes that wealthy students also generally have better health and more housing stability than their lower-income peers, both of which also lead to higher achievement.

Many of these shortcomings are inherent to these types of standardized tests. But some problems with the tests administered to children in many states are easily avoidable. [A 2013 investigation](http://www.myajc.com/news/news/errors-plague-testing-in-public-schools/nZwmw/) by Heather Vogell of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* found that problems like poorly-worded questions, missing pages in exam booklets, and malfunctions in answer-sheet scanners were commonplace in high-stakes standardized tests administered in states across the country, and that “the vast majority of states have experienced testing problems—some repeatedly.”

#### Tests questions are poorly designed

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

There are several problems with standardized testing. (1.) Many test questions are flawed: some have no right answer, while others have more than one; some questions are unclear or misleading; others are too difficult by two or three years beyond their intended age group; some questions are politically slanted; others contain product placements; some cover material never taught; and others are culturally biased against students of racial and ethnic minorities, [poor students](http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/07/why-poor-schools-cant-win-at-standardized-testing/374287/" \t "_hplink), students with disabilities, and immigrant students still learning English. There are [other problems](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/06/27/a-disturbing-look-at-common-core-tests-in-new-york/" \t "_hplink) as well. Diane Ravitch, America's preeminent education historian contends that the problem with the Common Core standards embodied in standardized testing is that they were written in a way that violates nationally and internationally recognized canons of setting standards and are so fundamentally flawed that they have no legitimacy whatsoever.

### Tests Don’t Measure Key Skills

#### Tests don’t measure essential skills

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

We’re testing the wrong things. States are required to test just two subjects: math and language. Reading is emphasized over writing because the tests are mainly multiple choice. Hugh Burkhardt is a British mathematician and international expert in both curricular design and assessment of mathematics. He has been a consultant on the development of the new Common Core tests. In his spare time he dabbles in elementary particle physics. When I ask him about the problems with tests as they are currently used in the United States, Burkhardt puts it this way, in a plummy accent: “Measurement error consists of two parts: systematic and statistical error. The systematic error in education is not measuring what you want to measure. . . . Psychometricians [test makers], who usually focus only on statistical error, grossly overestimate the precision of tests. . . . They just assess some bits that are easy to assess accurately.” In other words, to use a metaphor: if your telescope is out of focus, your problem is a statistical error. In Burkhardt’s opinion the lenses we’re using are sharp enough, but we are focusing on just a few stars at the expense of the universe of knowledge. Are we measuring what we really want to measure in education? A flood of recent research has supported the idea that creative problem solving, oral and written communication skills, and critical thinking, plus social and emotional factors, including grit, motivation, and the ability to collaborate, are just as important in determining success as traditional academics. All of these are largely outside the scope of most standardized tests, including the new Common Core– aligned tests. Scores on state tests do not correlate with students’ ability to think. In December 2013 MIT neuroscientists working with education researchers at Harvard and Brown Universities released a study of nearly 1,400 eighth graders in the Boston public school system. The researchers administered tests of the students’ fluid intelligence, or their ability to apply reasoning in novel situations, comprising skills like working memory capacity, speed of information processing, and the ability to solve abstract problems. By contrast, standardized tests mostly test crystallized intelligence, or the application of memorized routines to familiar problems. The researchers found that even the schools that did a good job raising students’ math scores on standardized tests showed almost no influence over the same students’ fluid intelligence. Daniel Koretz, the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and an expert in educational testing, writes in Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us: These tests can measure only a subset of the goals of education. Some goals, such as the motivation to learn, the inclination to apply school learning to real situations, the ability to work in groups, and some kinds of complex problem solving, are not very amenable to large-scale standardized testing. Others can be tested, but are not considered a high enough priority to invest the time and resources required . . . even in assessing the goals that we decide to measure and that can be measured well, tests are generally very small samples of behavior that we use to make estimates of students’ mastery of very large domains of knowledge and skill. So some important things we don’t test because the tests aren’t up to it. Some we could test but don’t bother. And for the things we do test, the tests are actually too small a sample of behavior to make wide-ranging judgments. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 15). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

#### Test anxiety means the tests are not a proper assessment

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

The kinds of standardized tests that have been used in U.S. public schools cannot assess critical thinking well, if at all. It is also true that many students do poorly on standardized tests even though they may have achieved mastery over the material. The stress of “test anxiety” can be debilitating for many students.

### Teaching to the Test

#### Testing causes teaching to the test

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

In an ideal world better test scores should show that teaching and learning are getting better. But, as Daniel Koretz explains, standardized tests have never delivered on that simple promise. “If a test is well designed, good instruction will produce increases in scores,” said Koretz. “But if the test is narrow enough, and you’re incentivizing teachers, many will stop doing the more general instruction in favor of the fairly modest amount of material that we can test well. NCLB focuses on easily tested portions of reading and math skills. Huge literatures say that’s a fundamental mistake.” In his book Koretz identifies seven rational teacher responses to high-stakes tests. From most desirable to least desirable, they are: 1. Working more effectively (e.g., finding better methods of teaching) 2. Teaching more (e.g., spending more time overall) 3. Working harder (e.g., giving more homework or harder assignments) 4. Reallocation (e.g., shifting resources, including time, to emphasize the subjects and types of questions on the test) 5. Alignment (e.g., matching the curriculum more closely to the material covered on the test) 6. Coaching students 7. Cheating How do we know which strategies teachers are applying? We can guess by looking at the types of tests we’re using. Reliability is a basic concept in the profession of test making (known as “psychometrics”). A reliable test is one in which this year’s test takers show pretty much the same distribution of scores as last year’s test takers. Think back to high school: if you took the SAT more than once, say, in the fall and spring, you would have noticed that the two tests were virtually identical even if no single question was repeated. It wouldn’t be fair to students if the fall 2014 test was very different from the spring 2015 test because that could lead to unpredictable variations in scores. In order to be reliable, then, tests must be at least somewhat predictable or at least change slowly and gradually from year to year. And in order to be relatively cheap to administer, standardized tests currently have to be mostly multiple choice and gradable by computer. Multiple-choice, predictable tests are inherently more susceptible to coaching and cheating. And high stakes applied to cheap tests drive even good teachers toward bad strategies. A first-grade teacher described on a blog exactly how testing had hurt her and her students: Standardized tests actually make students stupid. Yes, stupid. Not only are the kids not thinking, they are losing the ability to think. In my zeal to get administrative scrutiny off me and my students, I mistakenly thought that if I give [administrators] the test results they want, then I could do what I know was best for my students. To that end I trained my students to do well in these tests. I taught them to look for loopholes; to eliminate and guess; to find key words; to look for clues; in short, to exchange the process of thinking for the process of manipulation. Research suggests this teacher’s experience is a common one. The Center on Education Policy reported in 2007 that 44 percent of districts cut time from activities such as social studies, science, art and music, physical education, lunch, and recess after NCLB. “We’re seeing schools emphasize literacy skills and math to the detriment of civics, social studies, the arts, and anything creative,” Wayne Au at the University of Washington Bothell, author of a separate study on the topic, told me. Au found that even in the tested subjects teachers lectured more and raced to cover more ground for the sake of exposing students to all the material potentially covered on the test. This meant fragmented, out-of-context presentation of information— more time spent with teachers talking and students sitting and listening.

#### Encourages Cheating High stakes standardized testing encourages cheating

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The simplest way to improve a school’s test scores is a #2 pencil with an eraser. You take the test papers, erase the students’ incorrect answers and bubble in the correct ones. This is Daniel Koretz’s seventh and least desirable response to testing. It’s very likely that something like this took place in 2007– 2008 after Washington, DC, public school superintendent Michelle Rhee offered cash bonuses to principals with the greatest improvement in scores. Statistical evidence pointed to widespread fixing of test answers. But Rhee, who had built a national reputation on the numbers, refused to investigate and claimed not to have seen a memo detailing the cheating that was written by a whistleblower and later obtained by the press. (She refused to be interviewed for this book.) In no way is Washington, DC, an isolated case. According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report issued in May 2013, officials in thirty-three states confirmed at least one instance of cheating in the 2011 and 2012 school years, and in thirty-two of those cases, states canceled, invalidated, or nullified test scores as a result of cheating. Again, this was over just two school years. A 2012 investigation by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution showed that 196 school districts across the country exhibited test score patterns consistent with widespread cheating. In 2011– 2013, thirty-five educators were indicted in an FBI investigation for allegedly tampering with test scores in Atlanta, where school leaders held “erasing parties” to change student scores at forty-four schools; Louisiana investigated thirty-three schools in the charter-dominated Recovery School District of New Orleans for suspiciously high levels of erasures, improper administration of the tests, and other infractions; and two elementary schools on Long Island were investigated for teacher coaching of third, fourth, and fifth graders. University of Chicago economist Steven Levitt, of Freakonomics fame, analyzed statistical evidence of cheating in Chicago public schools. He found that “cheating by school personnel increased following the introduction of high-stakes testing, particularly in the lowest-performing classrooms.” The groups most likely to cheat were classrooms that did badly the previous year and classrooms in schools with lower achievement, higher poverty rates, and more African American students, all characteristics associated with lower test scores. “I’m not going to let the state slap them in the face and say they’re failures,” Damian Lewis, a teacher who participated in the Atlanta teaching scandal, told the New Yorker, explaining part of his justification for fixing answers. But at the same time, he said, “I couldn’t believe what we’d been reduced to.” After he and other teachers began changing student answers on state tests at Parks Middle School, the predominantly poor, African American school falsely “met” its NCLB proficiency goals for the first time in 2006. They held a pizza party for the whole school. “Everyone was jumping up and down,” Neekisia Jackson, a student, told the New Yorker. “It was like our World Series, our Olympics.” She went on, “We had heard what everyone was saying: Y’all aren’t good enough. Now we could finally go to school with our heads held high.” The school became nationally honored for both its focus on data and its fabricated achievement. When facing high stakes, students catch the cheating bug too, though not nearly as often as the people educating them. In the fall of 2012 twenty Long Island high school students were arrested for taking part in an SAT cheating ring; five of the students charged others up to $ 3,600 to sit for the exam. In the spring of 2013 students at more than 240 California schools broke the rules by posting pictures on social media while taking standardized tests, including pictures of test questions and answers. And in the spring of 2013 Nayeem Ahsan, a student at Stuyvesant High School, one of the best public schools in the nation, was caught texting hundreds of his classmates the answers on the state Regents Exams. Widespread cheating should undermine our faith in tests as an objective measure of student progress. Instead, it undermines the process of education itself. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 30). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### Poor Design

#### Standardized tests full of errors

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Kubach, Pearson’s CEO, rarely talks to the press. Our interview is rescheduled four times. When I get him on the phone he goes into great detail explaining the twenty- to twenty-five-step process by which test items are written and vetted by a series of committees. Then I ask him about the “pineapple question.” He knows exactly what I’m talking about. “Yeah, so the pineapple question . . . um,” he pauses. In 2012 the New York Daily News reported that students taking the New York state eighth-grade reading exam were asked to read a bizarre story about a talking pineapple that challenges a group of animals to a race. It doesn’t budge. At the end the animals eat the pineapple. The students were then asked two multiple-choice questions: Why did the animals eat the talking fruit? Which animal was wisest? This idiotic faux fable stumped teachers, students, and school officials alike. The pineapple story became a local scandal, forcing the state Education Department to officially announce that the question would not count against students. The most annoying part was that it wasn’t even new. The story had appeared on Pearson tests in several states since 2006, drawing complaints year after year. Kubach explained that this item, for some reason, went through a different review process from that used for the Common Core tests. He also said Pearson and New York State responded to the problems caused by the pineapple question. They changed the passage selection guidelines to reduce the use of “fables and fantasy stories”— no more ambiguous literature! But the mistakes on tests are far more widespread than one bad pineapple. If your child starts taking math and reading tests in third grade, by the time she gets to seventh grade odds are she will have taken at least one test on which her score was bogus. Each testing company employs a staff of psychometricians with advanced degrees, issues guidelines, and reviews most test items. But both the writing of actual test items, such as the pineapple question, and the grading of student writing is often farmed out to independent contractors making as little as $ 15 an hour. These workers, some of whom I’ve spoken with, aren’t required to have relevant degrees or any experience in education. Add this to the expanded and accelerated production schedule of these tests, with tens of thousands of questions in circulation each year, and flaws in standardized tests, ranging from poorly written questions like the one above to outright mistakes, are disquietingly common. In a yearlong investigation published in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in September 2013, Heather Vogell studied more than 92,000 test questions given over two years to students in forty-two states and Washington, DC. The investigation revealed that almost one in ten tests nationwide contained significant blocks of flawed questions— 10 percent or more of the questions on these tests had ambiguous or wrong answers. In other words, the percentage of flawed questions is high enough in one out of ten tests to place the fairness of the results in doubt. The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy reported that fifty high-profile testing mistakes had occurred in twenty states from 1999 through 2002. If anything, essay questions on standardized tests are even more questionable than multiple choice. They are supposed to be the place to demonstrate deeper learning and communications skills, yet they are typically graded by temporary workers who spend about two minutes per essay. In 2014 the head of the College Board announced that essays would become optional on the SAT. The reason: essay scores are predictive neither of student grades nor success in college. A series of experiments by Les Perelman at MIT had shown that nonsensical essays could get high scores from graders if they used the right vocabulary and length. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 34). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

#### The assessments are flawed

The **Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

*Fourth*, the vast majority of tests are aligned neither with new college- and career-ready standards nor with each other. We have seen numerous examples where districts gave lots of tests, yielding lots of numbers, but found that they were not anchored to any clear understanding of what the nation, states, or school districts wanted students to know or be able to do in order to be “college- and career-ready.” The result is a national educational assessment system that is incoherent and lacks any overarching strategy. Moreover, we think it is worth noting that most tests that schools administer don’t actually assess students on any particular content knowledge

### Narrow Education/Undermines Curriculum Development

#### Standardized tests narrow the focus of education and undermine it

John Aubrey Douglas, 2013, Douglas is Fellow in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities (2007). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

By requiring the SAT for admissions, the University of California has long sent a powerful message to schools and students that they need to prepare for the test. The modern infatuation with standardized testing, further promulgated by President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind initiative, has slowly but surely altered the curriculum of our schools toward a test preparation culture. Some of that is fine— schools need to be held accountable and measures of accomplishment are necessary. But the sheer force of this testing culture has narrowed the idea of what education is all about.

#### Standardized testing discourages teachers from developing fun and creative projects

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

The overemphasis on testing has led many teachers to eliminate projects and activities that provide students with an opportunity to be creative and imaginative, and scripted curriculum has become the norm in many classrooms. There is nothing creative or imaginative about filling in a bubble sheet for a multiple choice test. Students are so tired of prepping for and taking standardized test that some have protested by dressing up like zombies to protest — and thousands of families are opting their children out of taking high-stakes exams.

#### Standardized curriculum ignores individual abilities

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

–Every student is a unique individual with their own talents and abilities. The standardized testing regime fails to recognize the importance of individual achievement in education and instead uses a “cookie cutter” approach to learning that ignores students’ individual interests and abilities.

#### Local curriculum superior

Editors of *Rethinking Schools, 2013,*  The Trouble with Common Core, <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/27_04/edit274.shtml> DOA: 11-3-15

Rethinking Schools has always been skeptical of standards imposed from above. Too many standards projects have been efforts to move decisions about teaching and learning away from classrooms, educators, and school communities, only to put them in the hands of distant bureaucracies. Standards have often codified sanitized versions of history, politics, and culture that reinforce official myths while leaving out the voices, concerns, and realities of our students and communities. Whatever positive role standards might play in truly collaborative conversations about what our schools should teach and children should learn has been repeatedly undermined by bad process, suspect political agendas, and commercial interests.

### Teacher Morale

#### Excessive testing is destroying teacher morale

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

–Many teachers have become disillusioned with the time spent preparing students for, and administering, tests. Morale in the teaching profession is at a 20-year low.

### Cheating

#### Atlanta teaching scandal driven by testing

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

–Recent cheating scandals involving teachers and administrators in Atlanta and dozens of other cities have been directly linked to the pressure to raise test scores.

### A2: Need a Way to Assess Teachers

#### Tests don't assess teacher quality – only reflect students’ background

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

Ravitch makes reference to study after study that student test scores do not reflect teacher effectiveness at all, but rather the family income/socioeconomic background of the students who take them. Poverty and segregation are the real causes of low scores, not teachers. Poverty in all its overwhelming, soul-crushing malignity and the racial segregation of apartheid schools create a climate of hopelessness that inescapably dooms children to perpetual failure.

This same case is made in a 2013 Rutgers/Civil Rights Project [Report](http://ielp.rutgers.edu/docs/IELP%20final%20report%20on%20apartheid%20schools%20101013.pdf" \t "_hplink), New Jersey's Apartheid and Intensely Segregated Urban Schools: "Such double segregation by race and poverty is systematically linked to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes. Research has shown for half a century that children learn more when they are in schools with better-prepared classmates and excellent, experienced teachers, schools with a strong, well-taught curriculum, stability and high graduation and college-going rates.

"Concentrated poverty schools, which are usually minority schools, tend to have a high turnover of students and teachers, less-experienced teachers, much less-prepared students, and a more limited curriculum often taught at much lower levels because of the weak previous education of most students. They have much higher dropout rates and few students prepared for success in college (see page 14)."

#### Teachers can’t motivate students from horrific backgrounds

Frank Breslin, July 23, 2015, Huffington Post, Retired High School Teacher, Why America Demonizes Its Teachers – Part 5: What’s Wrong with Standardized Testing, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-breslin/why-america-demonizes-its_b_7860916.html> DOA: 7-23-15

Mss. Rhee and Brown simply claim that when students do poorly, it's solely the fault of their teachers and has nothing to do with home life, lack of parental involvement, poverty, or segregation. In fact, effective teachers can motivate students even when they are hungry, sick, malnourished, homeless, or live a war zone, all of which are simply "excuses" for children not learning.

#### Tests are not designed in a way to be an appropriate evaluation of teachers

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

*Sixth,* it is not clear that some of the tests that school districts administer were designed for the purposes for which they are used. The most controversial example is the use of state summative exams to evaluate school district staff when most of these tests were designed to track district and school progress, not individual staff-member proficiency. The Council would argue that test results should play a role in the evaluation of teachers and staff, but gains or losses on these instruments alone cannot be attributed solely to individual teachers or staff members. Still, the failure of these instruments to perform this evaluative role should not be reason not to hold people responsible for student outcomes.

### A2: Job Skills

#### Test prep focus trades-off with creativity and independence needed to succeed on the job

Drake Baer, May 15, 2015, Business Insider, <http://www.businessinsider.com/anya-kamenetz-the-test-interview-2015-5>, How Standardized Tests like the SAT have poisoned America’s classrooms, DOA: 10-26-15

**ANYA KAMENETZ:**There's a saying in social science that when you make a measure into a target, it stops being a good measure. Any measure you attach stakes to, people are going to be incentivized to manipulate it. The [Atlanta cheating scandal](http://www.businessinsider.com/the-strange-case-of-atlanta-schoolteacher-2014-10) is an example of teachers going the extra mile to fabricate test scores.

More and more research shows that we need our schools to prepare students for careers where they're going to be creative, innovative, team players, collaborative, good communicators, and the tests that we're giving students today measure none of those things, so we're actively discouraging the best teachers and administrators from doing the work they think is most important, and we're discouraging experimentation at a time where it's really sorely needed.

If you want students to be able to do jobs that don't exist today, then centralized planning and an outdated set of measurements to try and reach that outcome is going to be misguided at best.

There are people who believe "this is rigor" and we need to have a standard to measure those that far below the bar, but the question then becomes, is it better to have a metric that's totally meaningless but applies fairly to everyone, or is it better to pick and choose and be a little more individualized with the metrics that you're applying?

### A2: Improves Student Performance

#### NCLB tests have not improved education

Editors of *Rethinking Schools, 2013,*  The Trouble with Common Core, <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/27_04/edit274.shtml> DOA: 11-3-15

We have seen this show before. The entire country just finished a decade-long experiment in standards-based, test-driven school reform called No Child Left Behind. NCLB required states to adopt “rigorous” curriculum standards and test students annually to gauge progress towards reaching them. Under threat of losing federal funds, all 50 states adopted or revised their standards and began testing every student, every year in every grade from 3–8 and again in high school. (Before NCLB, only 19 states tested all kids every year, after NCLB all 50 did.)

By any measure, NCLB was a dismal failure in both raising academic performance and narrowing gaps in opportunity and outcomes. But by very publicly measuring the test results against benchmarks no real schools have ever met, NCLB did succeed in creating a narrative of failure that shaped a decade of attempts to “fix” schools while blaming those who work in them. By the time the first decade of NCLB was over, more than half the schools in the nation were on the lists of “failing schools” and the rest were poised to follow.

#### Students aren’t performing better, the standards are just decreasing

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

There are myriad ways that test scores can be manipulated to make a student or a school appear to be doing better than they actually are. For example, states have lowered the scores students need to pass, according to [a 2009 report](http://journals.sfu.ca/ijepl/index.php/ijepl/article/view/199) published in the International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership. Thus, while it is true that the number of students scoring “proficient” on state standardized tests has risen, real student achievement has not necessarily improved. Low-stakes, diagnostic tests, which are not subject to this type of manipulation because they are not attached to rewards or punishments for teachers or schools, confirm this finding. Math and reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have improved [incrementally at best](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/main2013/pdf/2014451.pdf), and have actually [declined](https://twitter.com/LDH_ed/status/484388825645326337/photo/1) on the Programme for International Student Assessment.

#### Minority scores have fallen in a time of rising standards and more tests

Maia Davis, October 31, 2015, Al Jazeera, Critics Blame Testing for Drop in National Math Scores, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/10/31/testing-blamed-for-drop-in-national-math-scores.html> DOA; 11-1-15

Welner added that although proponents of high-stakes testing say it is necessary for closing the achievement gap between white students and black and Latino students, the national scores show no recent progress in this area. The gaps between scores of black and white students, for example, remained unchanged in 2015, except for a small narrowing of the difference in 4th-grade math due to a decline in white students’ scores.

#### More tests have not improved academic outcomes

VNews, November 1, 2015, Editorial: Testing the Limits, <http://www.vnews.com/news/newsletter/19208686-95/editorial-testing-the-limits> DOA: 10-1-15

What’s so discouraging is that federally mandated tests have not helped to raise achievement or narrow the gap between rich and poor students — the primary goals of the program when a bipartisan Congress agreed to assess students. Basic math and reading skills may have improved ever so slightly in some states among some age groups. But after more than 10 years of test-based accountability, there is no solid evidence that high school students are performing better overall, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, long known as “the nation’s report card.” In short, the tests have been tested, and they’ve failed. Undoubtedly there is a role for purposeful national assessments to monitor student achievement. But no one should assume that standardized tests are synonymous with good education.

#### Kids just drop out or move to special education

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Schools and administrators have also pressured low-performing students to drop out or enter special education programs in order to raise overall test scores. According to [a 2010 report](http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/d05cb2181a4545db07_r2im6caqe.pdf) from the civil rights organization Advancement Project, “the practice of pushing struggling students out of school to boost test scores has become quite common.” And [a 2002 study](http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/early_research/pdf/H-S%20Analysis%20finalExec%20Summary.pdf) from researchers at Arizona State University found a correlation between high-stakes testing and “higher numbers of low performing students being suspended before testing days, expelled from school before tests, or being reclassified as exempt from testing because they are determined to be either Special Education or Limited English Proficient (LEP).”

#### High tests scores don’t improve cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, and speed

Allie Bidwell, US News & World Report, December 13, 2013, Study: High Standardized Test Scores Don’t Translate into Better Cognition, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/12/13/study-high-standardized-test-scores-dont-translate-to-better-cognition>

Even when students improve their scores on standardized tests, they don't always improve their cognitive abilities, such as memory, attention and speed, according to a new study released Thursday.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and Brown University tracked nearly 1,400 eighth grade students in the Boston public school system, including traditional, charter and [exam schools](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/exam) (in which admission is based on student grades and scores on an entrance exam). They found overall that even though some schools successfully raised their students' scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System state test, that improvement was not associated with an increase in what's known as the students' "fluid intelligence."

#### Finland has high scores and no emphasis on standardized testing

Sarah Jaffee, January 4, 2012, Standardized Tests Hurt Kids and Public Schools, Alternet, <http://www.alternet.org/story/153654/standardized_tests_hurt_kids_and_public_schools:_teachers,_parents_take_a_stand_against_corporate-backed_test_regime> DOA: 10-26-15

Other countries, too, see little benefit in constant testing. A recent story in the *Atlantic* looked at [Finland](http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/12/what-americans-keep-ignoring-about-finlands-school-success/250564/#.TwJhfJWGphg.facebook), which ranks near the top in every international survey of education, and found:

For starters, Finland has no standardized tests. The only exception is what's called the National Matriculation Exam, which everyone takes at the end of a voluntary upper-secondary school, roughly the equivalent of American high school.

Instead, Finland's education system focuses on equality and cooperation, not competition.

#### Lots of standardized testing does not improve NAEP scores

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

There is no correlation between the amount of mandated testing time and the reading and math scores in grades four and eight on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

#### More tests do not improve academic outcomes

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

*Seventh*, the fact that there is no correlation between testing time and student fourth and eighth grade results in reading and math on NAEP does not mean that testing is irrelevant, but it does throw into question the assumption that putting more tests into place will help boost overall student outcomes. In fact, there were notable examples where districts with relatively large amounts of testing time had very weak or stagnant student performance. To be sure, student scores on a high-level test like NAEP are affected by many more factors than the amount of time students devote to test taking. But the lack of any meaningful correlation should give administrators pause.

#### Testing has not improved education

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

After more than a dozen years of the  No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top eras in which high-stakes tests have dominated, students are no more ready to do well in college than they were before — and many are less

### A2: Need Standardized Graduation Requirements

#### Tests are gamed by states until they become meaningless

Anya Kamatez, journalist and education writer, 2015, The Test – Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But you don’t have to be, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

8. They are gamed by states until they become meaningless. More widespread and even more detrimental than the cheating that goes on at schools are the games that districts, states, and politicians play with the law’s definitions of “proficiency” and adequate yearly progress. No Child Left Behind states that each school, district, and state must make “adequate yearly progress” in increasing the proportion of students in each subgroup that state tests deem proficient. But the law did not define proficiency. You might think that the psychometricians and learning specialists who create the tests also decide what “proficiency” means for a given test in a given grade. You’d be wrong. Jeff Livingston is a senior vice president at CTB/ McGraw Hill, one of the big four companies responsible for creating and marketing annual tests to states. An African American, he defends testing passionately as an instrument of equity. But he also paints a picture of states essentially ordering up tests to get the scores they want. “Respecting the local nature of education decisions, NCLB allowed every state to create its own assessment regime, cutoff scores, and measures of AYP,” or adequate yearly progress, he said. The assessment regime is the set of tests being given in each grade and state. The cutoff score, also known as the cut score, is the score that designates proficiency. “And so what happened then,” Livingston explained, “is that you essentially had fifty state infrastructures in the process of putting together their own tests. You could have a state where 80 percent of kids are at or above grade level on the state tests but 20 to 30 percent are if you look at any nationally normed situation. And so it was in many ways a game to figure out who could create the test that met the minimum standards of adequacy without making the state education infrastructure look too bad, and I don’t know that it ends up being especially helpful for students.” I ask him: Didn’t the testing companies balk at participating in this kind of psychometric malpractice? Livingston chuckles. “Our job is to respond to what our customers ask us to do, and our customers are the representatives of their communities,” he said. “I can’t argue with a state board of education. We gave them precisely what they wanted in precisely the way that they wanted.” Doug Kubach, the CEO of Pearson School, the testing division of the largest education publishing company in the world, echoes this point: it’s out of our hands; the buck does not stop here. “We’re implementing the program and not designing or making decisions about it,” he tells me. “At the end of the day it is the state and the people working for the state that make the cut score decision.” Unfortunately, when political leaders set educational standards they tend to act with political motivation. The Northwestern Educational Association (NWEA) can put some flesh on that characterization. NWEA is a thirty-seven-year-old nonprofit testing company dedicated to low-stakes diagnostic testing meant to drive personalized instruction. Their tests are used in about half of the school districts in the country as well as 119 countries around the world. Over the last decade independent researchers have published a series of reports comparing NWEA test scores with state NCLB guidelines, and they have come to a single conclusion: there is no accountability in accountability measures. That’s because there is no consistency in state standards. In a 2009 report, “The Accountability Illusion,” researchers took actual NWEA results in a sample of eighteen elementary schools and compared them to AYP targets for schools and population subgroups in twenty-six states. They concluded, “The way NCLB rates schools appears to be idiosyncratic— even random— and opaque. . . . In Massachusetts, for example, a state with high proficiency cut scores and relatively challenging annual targets and AYP rules, only 1 of 18 elementary schools made AYP; in Wisconsin 17 schools made AYP. Same kids, same academic performance, same schools— different states, different cut scores, different rules. And very different results.” The Common Core was initially conceived partly as an opportunity to replace the hodgepodge of state-created tests with those produced by two federally funded multistate consortia, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced. But a dozen states, for cost or other reasons, are already balking at the tests the consortia produced and instead commissioning their own from other publishers. And even those states that use the tests from the big two consortia can still choose their own AYP targets, now covered by a hodgepodge of state waivers. So the basic problem— no consistent definition of proficiency— will persist. Kamenetz, Anya (2015-01-06). The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing–But You Don't Have to Be (p. 32). PublicAffairs. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Increases Technology Use

#### Greater technology use doesn’t improve education

Stevenson is a school librarian in Austin, November 1, 2015, The Statesman, Stevenson: Obama’s Retreat on No Child Left Behind is Long Overdue, <http://www.statesman.com/news/news/opinion/stevenson-obamas-retreat-on-no-child-left-behind-i/npBj7/> DOA: 11-1-15

What about technology? Although some education reformers advocate for gradually replacing the teacher with individualized computer instruction, recent studies at Duke University show that too much technology can actually impede learning, particularly among low-income students.

Because we are social animals, education centers on a relational core that reformers lose sight of. The special light that a teacher can switch on in a child — and that particular teacher may be different for every child — is something that can’t be measured or predicted. Despite millions of dollars, handing out laptops or iPads — the popular one-on-one device trend —has not proven to be effective in improving educational outcomes.

### A2: Need to Improve Cognitive Ability

#### Strengthening standardized testing does not improve cognitive ability

Scott Barry Kaufman is scientific director of the Imagination Institute in the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. He conducts research on the measurement and development of imagination, creativity, and play, and teaches the popular undergraduate course Introduction to Positive Psychology. Kaufman is author of *Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined* and co-author of the upcoming book *Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind* (with Carolyn Gregoire), Scientific American, Standardized Achievement Tests: What are they good for? Hint: Not Cognitive Ability, December 20, 2013, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/standardized-achievement-tests-what-are-they-good-for-hint-not-cognitive-ability/> DOA: 11-1-15

It's well known that good standardized test takers [also tend to have high cognitive ability](http://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Kaufman-et-al.-2012.pdf). That's not a shocker.

But until recently, very little research has looked at the effect of improving standardized achievement test performance. This is obviously a really important question, since we are so steeped in a standardized testing culture. Wouldn't it be nice to know what all this obsessive teaching to the test is really good for?

A new study makes it clear what growth in standardized test performance doesn't buy us: cognitive ability.

[Amy Finn](http://web.mit.edu/amyfinn/www/a_finn/), [John Gabrieli](http://gablab.mit.edu/index.php/gablab), and colleagues at MIT, Brown, and Harvard looked at standardized test scores (Math and English language arts) and cognitive ability (working memory, processing speed, and abstract reasoning) among nearly 1,400 8th graders attending traditional, exam, and charter public schools in Boston.

Here are the highlights:

* There was a substantial correlation between standardized test scores and cognitive ability. In other words, good test takers already tend to have high levels of working memory, processing speed, and abstract reasoning skills.
* Cognitive ability was associated with growth in achievement test scores from 4th to 8th grade.
* The school a student attended, and the quality of education they received, played little role in the growth of cognitive ability. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that [cognitive ability predicts academic achievement, but academic achievement does not predict cognitive ability](http://edpsychassociates.com/Papers/IQachieveCrossLag%282007%29.pdf).
* The school a student attended, and the quality of education they received, did play a role in the growth of standardized achievement test scores.
* Students attending a charter school as a result of winning the admissions lottery had higher standardized test scores compared to students who lost the lottery.
* There was no difference between the lottery groups, however, on measures of cognitive ability.

Why does this matter? Well, there are various ways of looking at this.

If standardized testing is your thing, you'll be comforted to know that the results are promising that achievement test scores can be improved, and quality of instruction does have an impact on test scores.

If cognitive ability is more your thing, you might be a bit disappointed to see that schools aren't doing a good job boosting particular cognitive skills. That might be troublesome, considering the importance of fluid reasoning and executive functioning (such as working memory and cognitive inhibition) for a wide range of important life outcomes, including school performance, drug use, crime, and achieving virtually any goal you have in life. As the researchers point out, there are examples of targeted programs that increase [cognitive control](https://067b399c-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/csulalearnlab/412a/roject/Diamond2007THEEARLY.pdf?attachauth=ANoY7cq4OWTxxVGK-RkI918BP_dzci-HnQUqARlgg4BwW19tOhuBiJZdyxF5GUmkhu51gequ_80nK3cwPeM1H4LV-cPp11t2_4i8JqXgLtNb0bXazwnSHeQhGJlIHMxy6fejEv6-vrJd0F6OWrGGJMPgThRMGkAr6nt6Q1rxh8W-LCiXwYz25Fcqqe2O7-eI2sIvy7iVDavbQELZoOi09NQvSi63-O9ioMWA8gRuHxpuT83BCLnYo2Xragd_nKEieNMTfl1ujEGR&attredirects=0) and [reasoning](http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/2013/03/18/reasoning-training-increases-brain-connectivity-associated-with-high-level-cognition/). It just looks like teaching to the standardized tests isn't going cut it.

### A2: Need to Assess Students to Improve Education

#### We don’t have resources needed to make sense of the data we collect

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

The flip side of this coin is that tests are not always very good at doing what we need them to do, they don’t tell us everything that is important about a child, and they don’t tell us what to do when results are low. This occurs for a variety of reasons: Data come too late to inform immediate instructional needs; teachers aren’t provided the professional development they need on how to read, interpret, and make use of the results in their classrooms; teachers and administrators don’t trust the results, believe the tests are of low quality, or think the results are misaligned with the standards they are trying to teach; or the multiple tests provide results that are contradictory or yield too much data to make sense of. The result is that the data from all this testing aren’t always used to inform classroom practice. In addition, some students fail to see the multitude of tests as important or relevant, and they do not always put forward their best efforts to do well on them.

#### There are plenty of other assessments that do that, high stakes tests are not needed

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Yet many proponents of annual high-stakes standardized testing continue to argue in its favor by framing it as a civil rights issue. In a January 2015 Senate debate over the reauthorization of NCLB, Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) [argued](http://www.nationaljournal.com/next-america/education/is-standardized-testing-a-civil-rights-issue-20150123), “We know that if we don’t have ways to measure students’ progress, and if we don’t hold our states accountable, the victims will invariably be the kids from poor neighborhoods, children of color, and students with disabilities.” However, there are plenty of other non-annual, low-stakes tests not mandated by NCLB, like the National Assessment of Educational Progress, that demonstrate this achievement gap without many of the harmful consequences associated with their high-stakes counterparts.

#### High stakes tests not being used for productive assessment

Meghan Erickson, 2015, Standardized Testing: The Monster that Ate American Education, <http://bigthink.com/think-tank/standardized-testing-the-monster-that-ate-american-education> DOA: 10-26-15

In practice, test scores are not being used for diagnostic purposes but as a clumsy and myopic way to evaluate (and penalize) American schools, teachers, and students. Since the bipartisan passage of the No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB](http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml" \t "_blank)) in 2001, students have been required to demonstrate "Adequate Yearly Progress" in reading and math, based solely on test performance. Failure means being held back a grade.

Given the historic resistance of Americans to the idea of a "national curriculum," NCLB stopped short of dictating what content students would learn -- that is decided at the state and local level -- but it did mandate that states develop tests which children would take in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school. These tests would be used to "compare schools" and districts. Schools must also meet AYP or risk being closed.

The legislation was designed to address the growing achievement gap between rich and poor students in American schools. "The problem," as Ravitch writes in *The Life and Death of the Great American School System*, "was the misuse of testing for high-stakes purposes, the belief that tests could identify with certainty which students should be held back, which teachers and principals should be fired or rewarded, and which schools should be closed--and the idea that these changes would inevitably produce better education."

#### Tests don’t adequately assess students’ strengths and weaknesses

Meghan Erickson, 2015, Standardized Testing: The Monster that Ate American Education, <http://bigthink.com/think-tank/standardized-testing-the-monster-that-ate-american-education> DOA: 10-26-15

And just as standardized tests can never give us a full picture of where students are coming from, they also fail to convey the full scope of a student's strengths and weaknesses.

"If we think about what our needs are for the twenty-first century, and not just how do we compete in the world but how do we live in the world, how do we survive in the world, we need a generation of people who will succeed us who are thoughtful, who can reflect, who can think," says Ravitch. The question is, does testing really provide us with a measure of how well students utilize higher-order thinking skills? If not, perhaps it's time to reconsider the use of standardized tests as a monolithic means of evaluation in K-12 education.

#### Test scores demonstrate an advantage gap, not an achievement gap

Drake Baer, May 15, 2015, Business Insider, <http://www.businessinsider.com/anya-kamenetz-the-test-interview-2015-5>, How Standardized Tests like the SAT have poisoned America’s classrooms, DOA: 10-26-15 AK=Anya Kamentez, veteran education reporter,

**AK:** It's easy to confuse people's circumstances with their innate merit. That's kind of the definition that we've been stuck with all these years. Yet SAT scores and scores on tests that kids take today are so highly correlated with family income and with race. We know now that that is a measure of social advantage, not innate ability.

Yet we accept the idea of an achievement gap. It's not in any way an achievement gap. It's an advantage gap. The idea that these scores are applied to children as though they define the children instead of defining the children's circumstances is something that recurs again and again and is not helpful.

What we're trying to assess through process of education is what people can do and how people can change. What we want know about is their motivations, their interests, what's going to get them from here to there, how hard do they try, what are their resources, what are the levers inside the kids that's going to lead them to succeed and do their personal best, and these are the qualities that great teachers are oriented to discover, and our standardized tests don't do that. They're much more concerned with labeling people in a fixed way, and that's what they've always been designed to do.

We want to affect people's understanding of their role in the world, and if they apply themselves and invoke maximum effort they're actually going to be able to get results, and the people who believe that and have the support to do it do overcome their circumstances and their background. That's what innovative educators are really trying to look at.

### A2: Test Scores Increase Achievement

#### Standards empirically don’t increase achievement

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The task force offered three recommendations. One was that the states should adopt the Common Core standards in mathematics and reading, already endorsed by forty-six states. Since the Common Core standards have never been field-tested, no one knows whether they will raise test scores or cause the achievement gap among different racial, ethnic, and income groups to narrow or to widen. One study, by Tom Loveless of the Brookings Institution, predicted that the standards would have little or no effect on academic achievement; he noted that “from 2003 to 2009, states with terrific standards raised their National Assessment of Educational Progress scores by roughly the same margin as states with awful ones.” Loveless reported that there was as much variation within states, even those with excellent standards, as between states. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 959-966). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Test Scores Needed to Improve Schools for Minorities

#### Turn – we should use the $ to expand educational opportunities in schools

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Given all of these problems with standardized testing, it seems that the civil rights issue is too much testing, not too little. Instead of forcing low-income schools to spend millions of dollars and countless hours of class time preparing for and administering standardized tests that only serve to prove, oftentimes inaccurately, what we already know about the achievement gap, we should use those resources to expand programs in the arts and humanities, to provide incentive pay to attract teachers to areas where they are needed most, and to decrease class sizes, all things that could actually make a difference for disadvantaged students.

### A2: Need to Test Kids to Tailor Education

#### Tests don’t assess properly

[Quinn Mulholland](http://harvardpolitics.com/author/quinnmulholland/), May 14, 2015, Harvard Politics, The Case Against Standardized Testing, <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>, DOA: 10-25-15

Furthermore, arguments like Murray’s assume that standardized tests are good proxies for student learning, which oftentimes is not the case. According to Stanford University professor of education Linda Darling-Hammond, “The tests we use, particularly the state standardized tests, are extremely narrow. Evidence shows that they measure almost exclusively low-level skills.” [A 2012 study](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/2012/RAND_WR967.pdf) from the RAND Corporation backs this claim, finding that only three to 10 percent of elementary and middle school students in the United States were administered tests that assessed deeper learning skills. And even the low-level skills that the tests do measure can be impacted by how much sleep the student got the night before the test and whether the room where the student took the test was too hot or cold.

### A2: Not That Much Time Spent on Testing

#### There is also indirect time

**Council of Great City Schools**, Student Testing in America’s Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis, **October 2015,** <http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf> DOA: 10-31-15

*Second*, students spend a fair amount of time taking tests, but the extent of it really depends on the state, the district, the student’s grade level, and their learning needs and aspirations. It was clear from our research that the time needed – on average -- to take mandatory tests amounts to about 25 hours or so or between four and five days per school year -- about 2.34 percent of a typical 180 day school year. This is not a large portion of a school system’s total instructional time. However, in practice, testing time can be divided over more than four or five days, and additional instructional time may be lost in downtime (e.g., state NCLB exams may be given in sections with one subject taking multiple half-days). The total can eat into teachers’ and students’ time, particularly if one also takes into account the time necessary to administer the tests and prepare for them. Moreover, much of this testing stacks up in the second half of the school year in a way that makes the second semester seem like one long test.

### Critique of “Achievement Gap”

Camika Royal, November 8, 2012, “Please stop using the phrase ‘achievement gap’,” http://thenotebook.org/blog/125318/please-stop-using-phrase-achievement-gap

The term “achievement gap” is grounded in Whiteness and reinforces the inequalities they are trying to reduce

Recently, I've been more and more troubled by the phrase "achievement gap." I was a 1999 Teach For America corps member and recently, in my occasional work with the organization, I've begun to share my concerns about what this concept suggests.

Because of America's racial history and legacy, the cross-racial comparison that holds up white student achievement as the universally standard goal is problematic. Further, the term "achievement gap" is inaccurate because it blames the historically marginalized, under-served victims of poor schooling and holds whiteness and wealth as models of excellence. And, as with all misnomers, the thinking that undergirds the achievement gap only speaks of academic outcomes, not the conditions that led to those outcomes, nor does it acknowledge that the outcomes are a consequence of those conditions.

### Achievement Focus Bad

Achievement is focused on corporate needs, should focus on social justice

Kathy Emery, Phd, Corporate Control of Public School Goals: High-Stakes Testing in its Historical Perspective, http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/Emery/Emery\_teqarticle.pdf

Anyon, in Radical Possibilities (2005), argues that there can be no real systemic progressive educational reform unless it is the context of a social movement. History seems to agree with her. Yet, at the moment, we are in between social movements. Corporate America has learned the lessons of the Sixties well. Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, like Roosevelt’s New Deal, succeeded in undermining and co-opting the very organizations, leaders and programs that had begun to create real participatory leadership at the local level.

Corporate foundations today have taken over where federal programs have left off, draining organizing capacity into non-profits who are pitted against each other for both government and corporate foundation support. In this and other ways, community organizations fail to form the kinds of coalitions that a social movement requires.

Anyon (2005, Chapter 9) points to IAF, PICO, and ACORN and other groups as evidence of growing structural support for the next social movement. But, what will happen to the funding of these groups if they truly become effective at mobilizing local communities to restructure the decision making process so that corporate CEOs no longer monopolize the decision-making process? Will these groups bite the hand that feeds them? If so, do they have a plan to survive the response? Anyon also argues that teachers can play a key role in helping these various groups form powerful coalitions

. . . [T]he disastrous state of the educational systems in urban areas today could provide impetus to organizing a new social movement . . . . In U.S. cities, moreover, several active but largely unreported progressive movements are already flourishing: community and education organizing, the living wage movement, progressive labor and faith-basted coalitions, and a new and urgent emergence of organized urban youth . . . What needs to be accomplished is a convergence of these various movements around a set of issues that all can agree are crucial . . . . Concerned public school educators would be key in all this work. (Anyon, 2005, p. 5)

I am hoping that Anyon is correct in this analysis. Social movements develop when knowledgeable organizers connect with local infrastructures at the right historical moment. But teachers and their unions are not thinking along these lines—yet. For the past five years, I have been part of various groups who were trying to organize teachers, parents, and students around affordable housing, universal health care and a progressive vision for educational reform. My disappointment in the limited effectiveness of these efforts led me to return to studying history for some answers. This led me and three others to create a “Freedom School” in San Francisco in the summer of 2005. Our Freedom School is not focused on academic achieve- ment, which to my mind, is buying into the corporate paradigm. Instead, we took our inspiration directly from the Citizenship Curriculum of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools.

We feel that we can make a small contribution to the next social movement by teaching the detailed history of the Southern Freedom Movement so that those who need nurturing, inspiration or tool building can learn from the past.

# Standardized Testing Bad – No Education Crisis

### A2: Educational Crisis

#### High school graduation rates increasing, racial achievement gap decreasing

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

In contrast to the current rhetoric of crisis, Lawrence Mishel and Joydeep Roy of the Economic Policy Institute analyzed census data for the past four decades, not four-year graduation rates, and concluded that “there has been remarkable progress in raising both high school completion rates and in closing racial/ ethnic gaps in high school completion.” In reviewing the debate among scholars, Mishel and Roy offer a valuable guide to the different ways of calculating graduation rates. 3 Mishel and Roy recognize that some students take longer than four years to get their high school diplomas. Some get a GED instead of a four-year diploma. By the time the census counts high school graduates in the eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old cohort, 90 percent have a high school diploma. It’s true that a GED does not carry the same prestige as a four-year diploma, and economists say that holders of the GED do not earn as much as those with a four-year high school diploma. But most colleges accept a GED as evidence of graduation, and those with a GED have a chance to get postsecondary education and are likely to earn more than high school dropouts. Whatever its drawbacks, the GED is nonetheless a high school diploma, and for many young people whose high school education was interrupted, for whatever reason, it is a lifeline. Federal data show that the proportion of people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four who are not presently enrolled in high school and who have earned either a high school diploma or an alternative credential, including a GED, is 90 percent. This rate includes people who may have earned their high school degrees in another country, but it does not include those who are in the military (almost all of whom have high school degrees) and those who are incarcerated (who are less likely than their peers to have high school diplomas). 4 Unlike the four-year graduation rate, which has increased slowly, the completion rate for this age group has trended steadily upward for the past thirty years. Looked at this way, the narrative is transformed from a story of stagnation and crisis to a story of incremental progress. Most of these additional diplomas were earned by the age of eighteen or nineteen. Among that age group, 89 percent had a high school diploma. In other words, within one year after the traditional four-year program, the graduation rate went from 75 percent (or 78 percent) to 89 percent. Among young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four who were Asian/ Pacific Islanders, the completion rate was 96 percent. Among white youths, it was 94 percent. Among black youths, it was 87 percent. Among American Indians/ Alaska Natives, it was 82 percent. Among Hispanics, it was 77 percent. 5 (See graph 34.) The lowest graduation rate (63 percent) was found among Hispanic youths aged eighteen to twenty-four who were born outside the continental United States. Many of the Hispanic youths in this age group are recent immigrants who never attended American high schools. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1603-1611). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Drop out rate decreasing

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

But it is important to know whether the situation with dropouts is getting worse. After all, the definition of a “crisis” is that matters are getting worse than they were and are reaching a critical point. Here is what the federal data show: “Among all individuals in this age group, status dropout rates trended downward between 1972 and 2009, from 15 percent to 8 percent.” Asian/ Pacific Islanders have the lowest dropout rate at 3 percent. Among whites, the dropout rate was 5 percent. The black dropout rate was 9 percent. The Hispanic dropout rate was 18 percent. 8 (See graphs 36 and 37.) And look at the trend over time in the status dropout rate. Among whites, the dropout rate in 1972 was 12 percent. That is the proportion of whites between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four who were not enrolled in school and did not have high school diplomas. By 2009, the dropout rate for whites was down to 5 percent. Among blacks, the dropout rate in 1972 was 21 percent in this age group. By 2009, the dropout rate for blacks was down to 9 percent. That is impressive progress. Among Hispanics, the dropout rate in 1972 was 34 percent. By 2009, it was down to 18 percent. That is impressive progress, too. We can’t keep crying wolf when we are making progress. The progress has been slow and steady. But it is progress. We are moving in the right direction. It would be best if no one dropped out. It would be best if everyone earned a high school diploma, but the crucial fact to note is that the data contradict the narrative of crisis. The dropout rate is trending downward. We are moving forward. We are making progress. The dropout rate has actually been cut by about 40 percent overall between 1972 and 2009 and reduced even more for blacks and Hispanics, the groups that are most at risk for dropping out. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1638-1642). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### A2: International Competitiveness

#### Relatively low international scores due to poverty, not a lack of testing

Stephen Krashen, January 25, 2014, Schools Matter, The Common Core: A Disaster for Libraries, A Disaster for Language Arts, A Disaster for American Education, Knowledge Quest 42 (3), <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/the-common-core-disaster-for-libraries.html> DOA: 10-26-15

The major argument for the common core is the assertion that our schools are terrible and that something needs to be done about the situation. The only evidence cited in support of this argument is the claim that our international test scores are very low. We must therefore force students and teachers into doing better. This "improvement" will be done by establishing tough standards that control what is taught and by testing students on the standards, thereby making sure that the standards are taught.   
But analyses of our international test scores have revealed that American international test scores are nowhere near as bad as critics claim and that they have not declined (Loveless 2011). In fact, when we control for the effects of poverty, American students rank near the top of the world (Carnoy and Rothstein 2013).   
Our overall scores are unspectacular because of our high rate (more than 23%) of child poverty, the second highest among all industrialized countries (UNICEF, 2012). In comparison, Finland, a country that consistently has high scores, has about 5% child poverty.   
The products of our educational system do very well: The U.S. economy is ranked as the fifth most innovative in the world out of 142, according to the 2013 Global Innovation Index, which is based in part on the availability of education, new patents and the publication of scientific and technical journal articles (Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO, 2013).   
Every indication points to a continuation of this record of success. Our educational system is doing much better than it needs to in the area of science and technology. In the US two to three qualified graduates are available for each science/tech opening (Salzman, 2012; Salzman and Lowell, 2007, 2008; see also Teitelbaum, 2007) and according to the *Atlantic* (Weismann, 2013), the US is producing more Ph.D.s in science than the market can absorb.   
Finally, there is no evidence that having national standards and increasing testing have improved student learning in the past (Nichols, Glass and Berliner, 2006; Tienken, 2011).

#### Poverty and a lack of books are the problem

Stephen Krashen, January 25, 2014, Schools Matter, The Common Core: A Disaster for Libraries, A Disaster for Language Arts, A Disaster for American Education, Knowledge Quest 42 (3), <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/the-common-core-disaster-for-libraries.html> DOA: 10-26-15

**The real problem: Poverty**   
As noted above, when we control for poverty, American students rank near the top of the world

on international tests. This finding confirms that poverty is the major factor in determining school achievement, a finding that is consistent with the results of many studies showing the powerful negative impact of poverty on many aspects of learning, including, of course, reading comprehension and other aspects of literacy development (e.g. Biddle, 2001; Duncan and Brooks- Gunn, 2001).   
Studies have documented how poverty impacts school performance: Food insecurity, lack of health care, and lack of access to books, among other aspects of poverty, all have devastating effects on student's ability to learn.   
***Food insecurity***   
Children of poverty are likely to suffer from food insecurity (hunger and concern about future availability of food). Studies (Coles 2008/2009) show that food insecure children more likely to have slow language development and problems in social behavior and emotional control. They are more likely to miss school days, repeat a grade, and have academic problems.   
The effects of food insecurity are reversible: when previously food-secure children experience food insecurity, their reading development slows down relative to food secure children. But "a change from food insecurity to food security can bring concomitant improvements: the study also found that poor reading performance for food insecure children in the beginning grades was reversed if the household became food secure by 3rd grade" (Coles, 2008/2009).   
***Lack of health care***   
High-poverty families are more likely to lack medical insurance or have high co-payments, cicumstances that result in less medical care, and more childhood illness and absenteeism, which of course negatively impacts school achievement. David Berliner cites studies showing that "children in poor families in most states are six times more likely to be in less than optimal health, experiencing a wide variety of illnesses and injuries, as compared with children in higher income families" (2009, p. 16). School is not helping: Poor schools are more likely to have no school nurse or have a high ratio of students to nurses (Berliner, 2009).   
***Lack of access to books***   
There is very clear evidence that children from high-poverty families have very little access to books at home, at school, and in their communities (Newman and Celano, 2001; Duke, 2001; additional studies reviewed in Krashen, 2004). Studies also show when children have access to interesting and comprehensible reading material, they read (Krashen, 2001; 2004). And finally, when children read, they improve in all aspects of literacy, including vocabulary, grammar, spelling, reading and writing ability (McQuillan, 1998; Krashen, 2004). In fact, the evidence is strong that reading for pleasure, self-selected reading, is the major cause of advanced literacy development. Making sure that all children have access to books makes literacy development possible. Without it, literacy development is impossible.   
*Libraries*   
Libraries are often the only source of books and other reading material for children of poverty and they are a potent source: A number of studies confirm that providing access to books via libraries has a positive impact on reading development: The better the library (more books, presence of a credentialed librarian, better staffing), the higher the reading scores (e.g.Lance and Helgren,

2010) Krashen, 2011). Multivariate studies show that the positive impact of school libraries can be as strong as the negative impact of poverty on reading achievement (Achterman, 2008; Krashen, Lee and McQuillan, 2012): in other words, a good library can offset the effect of poverty on literacy development.

#### Standardized test scores didn’t decline, more kids just started taking the tests

Dean Paton wrote this article for Education Uprising, the Spring 2014 issue of YES!

Magazine . Dean is executive editor of YES!, www.yesmagazine.org/issues/education-uprising/the-myth-behind-public-school-failure

For a document that’s had such lasting impact, “A Nation At Risk” is remarkably free of

facts and solid data. Not so the Sandia Report, a little-known follow-up study

commissioned by Admiral James Watkins, Reagan’s secretary of energy; it discovered

that the falling test scores which caused such an uproar were really a matter of an

expansion in the number of students taking the tests. In truth, standardized-test scores

were going up for every economic and ethnic segment of students—it’s just that, as more

and more students began taking these tests over the 20-year period of the study, this

more representative sample of America’s youth better reflected the true national

average. It wasn’t a teacher problem. It was a statistical misread.

The government never officially released the Sandia Report. It languished in peerreview

purgatory until the Journal of Educational Research published it in 1993. Despite

its hyperbole (or perhaps because of it), “A Nation At Risk” became a timely cudgel for

the larger privatization movement. With Reagan and Friedman, the Nobel-Prizewinning

economist, preaching that salvation would come once most government

services were turned over to private entrepreneurs, the privatizers began proselytizing to

get government out of everything from the post office to the public schools.

### A2: Schools are Failing

#### No, the best assessment of educational progress proves they are not

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Critics have complained for many years that American students are not learning as much as they used to or that academic performance is flat. But neither of these complaints is accurate. We have only one authoritative measure of academic performance over time, and that is the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as NAEP (pronounced “nape”). NAEP is part of the U.S. Department of Education. It has an independent governing board, called the National Assessment Governing Board. By statute, the governing board is bipartisan and consists of teachers, administrators, state legislators, governors, businesspeople, and members of the general public. President Clinton appointed me to that board, and I served on it for seven years. I know that the questions asked on its examinations are challenging. I am willing to bet that most elected officials and journalists today would have a hard time scoring well on the NAEP tests administered across the nation to our students. Every time I hear elected officials or pundits complain about test scores, I want to ask them to take the same tests and publish their scores. I don’t expect that any of them would accept the challenge. Critics may find this hard to believe, but students in American public schools today are studying and mastering far more difficult topics in science and mathematics than their peers forty or fifty years ago. People who doubt this should review the textbooks in common use then and now or look at the tests then and now. If they are still in doubt, I invite them to go to the NAEP Web site and review the questions in math and science for eighth-grade students. The questions range from easy to very difficult. Surely an adult should be able to answer them all, right? You are likely to learn, if you try this experiment, that the difficulty and complexity of what is taught today far exceed anything the average student encountered in school decades ago. NAEP is central to any discussion of whether American students and the public schools they attend are doing well or badly. It has measured reading and math and other subjects over time. It is administered to samples of students; no one knows who will take it, no one can prepare to take it, no one takes the whole test. There are no stakes attached to NAEP; no student ever gets a test score. NAEP reports the results of its assessments in two different ways. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1004-1007). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### NAEP doesn’t prove students are failing

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Here are definitions of NAEP’s achievement levels: “Advanced” represents a superior level of academic performance. In most subjects and grades, only 3– 8 percent of students reach that level. I think of it as A +. Very few students in any grade or subject score “advanced.” “Proficient” represents solid achievement. The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) defines it as “solid academic performance for each grade assessed. This is a very high level of academic achievement. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.” From what I observed as a member of the NAGB who reviewed questions and results over a seven-year period, a student who is “proficient” earns a solid A and not less than a strong B +. “Basic,” as defined by the NAGB, is “partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.” In my view, the student who scores “basic” is probably a B or C student. “Below basic” connotes students who have a weak grasp of the knowledge and skills that are being assessed. This student, again in my understanding, would be a D or below. The film Waiting for “Superman” misinterpreted the NAEP achievement levels. Davis Guggenheim, the film’s director and narrator, used the NAEP achievement levels to argue that American students were woefully undereducated. The film claimed that 70 percent of eighth-grade students could not read at grade level. That would be dreadful if it were true, but it is not. NAEP does not report grade levels (grade level describes a midpoint on the grading scale where half are above and half are below). Guggenheim assumed that students who were not “proficient” on the NAEP were “below grade level.” That is wrong. Actually, 76 percent on NAEP are basic or above, and 24 percent are below basic. It would be good to reduce the proportion who are “below basic,” but it is 24 percent, not the 70 percent that Guggenheim claimed.

Michelle Rhee, the former chancellor of the District of Columbia public schools, makes the same error in her promotional materials for her advocacy group called StudentsFirst. She created this organization after the mayor of Washington, D.C., was defeated and she resigned her post. StudentsFirst raised millions of dollars, which Rhee dedicated to a campaign to weaken teachers’ unions, to eliminate teachers’ due process rights, to promote charter schools and vouchers, and to fund candidates who agreed with her views. Her central assertion is that the nation’s public schools are failing and in desperate shape. Her new organization claimed, “Every morning in America, as we send eager fourth graders off to school, ready to learn with their backpacks and lunch boxes, we are entrusting them to an education system that accepts the fact that only one in three of them can read at grade level.” Like Guggenheim, she confuses “grade level” with “proficiency.” The same page has a statement that is more accurate, saying, “Of all the 4th graders in the U.S., only ⅓ of them are able to read this page proficiently.” That’s closer to the NAEP definition, yet it is still a distortion, akin to saying it is disappointing that only ⅓ of the class earned an A. But to deepen the confusion, the clarifying statement is followed by “Let me repeat that. Only one in three U.S. fourth-graders can read at grade level. This is not okay.” So, two out of three times, Rhee confuses “proficiency” (which is a solid A or B + performance) with “grade level” (which means average performance).

What are the facts? Two-thirds of American fourth graders were reading at or above basic in 2011; one-third were reading below basic. Thirty-four percent achieved “proficiency,” which is solid academic performance, equivalent to an A. Three-quarters of American eighth graders were reading at or above basic in 2011; a quarter were reading below basic. Thirty-four percent achieved “proficiency,” equivalent to a solid A. (See graph 5; graphs 5– 41 appear in the appendix.) Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1067-1071). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Unfortunately, you can’t generate a crisis atmosphere by telling the American public that there are large numbers of students who don’t earn an A. They know that. That is common sense. Ideally, no one would be “below basic,” but that lowest rating includes children who are English-language learners and children with a range of disabilities that might affect their scores. Only in the dreams of policy makers and legislators is there a world where all students reach “proficiency” and score an A. If everyone scored an A or not less than a B +, the reformers would be complaining about rampant grade inflation— and they would be right. In recent years, reformers complained that student achievement has been flat for the past twenty years. They make this claim to justify their demand for radical, unproven strategies like privatization. After all, if we have spent more and more and achievement has declined or barely moved for two decades, then surely the public educational system is “broken” and “obsolete,” and we must be ready to try anything at all. This is the foundational claim of the corporate reform movement. But it is not true. Let’s look at the evidence. NAEP has tested samples of students in the states and in the nation every other year since 1992 in reading and mathematics. Here is what we know from NAEP data. There have been significant increases in both reading and mathematics, more in mathematics than in reading. The sharpest increases were registered in the years preceding the implementation of NCLB, from 2000 to 2003.4 Reading scores in fourth grade have improved slowly, steadily, and significantly since 1992 for almost every group of students. (See graph 6.) • The scale scores in reading show a flat line, but this is misleading. Every group of students saw gains, but the overall line looks flat because of an increase in the proportion of low-scoring students. This is known to statisticians as Simpson’s paradox. 5 • The proportion of fourth-grade students who were proficient or advanced increased from 1992 to 2011. In 1992, 29 percent of students were proficient or above; in 2011, it was 34 percent. • The proportion of fourth-grade students who were “below basic” declined from 38 percent in 1992 to 33 percent in 2011. • The scores of white students, black students, Hispanic students, and Asian students in fourth grade were higher in 2011 than in 1992. The only group that saw a decline was American Indian students. 6 (See graphs 7, 8, 9, and 10, which show rising scores for whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, but not for American Indians.)

Reading scores in eighth grade have improved slowly, steadily, and significantly since 1992 for every group of students. • The proportion of eighth-grade students who were proficient or advanced increased from 1992 to 2011. In 1992, 29 percent of students were proficient or above; in 2011, it was 34 percent. (See graph 11.) • The proportion of eighth-grade students who were “below basic” declined from 31 percent in 1992 to 24 percent in 2011. • The scores of white students, black students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and American Indian students in eighth grade were higher in 2011 than in 1992.

Don’t believe anyone who claims that reading has not improved over the past twenty years. It isn’t true. NAEP is the only gauge of change over time, and it shows slow, steady, and significant increases. Students of all racial and ethnic groups are reading better now than they were in 1992. And that’s a fact. Mathematics scores in fourth grade have improved dramatically from 1992 to 2011. • The proportion of fourth-grade students who were proficient or advanced increased from 1990 to 2011. In 1990, 13 percent of students were proficient or above; in 2011, it was 40 percent. (See graph 2.) • The proportion of fourth-grade students who were “below basic” declined from 50 percent in 1990 to an astonishingly low 18 percent in 2011. • The scores of white students, black students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and American Indian students in fourth grade were higher in 2011 than in 1992.

Mathematics scores in eighth grade have improved dramatically from 1992 to 2011. (See graph 21.)

• The proportion of eighth-grade students who were proficient or advanced increased from 1990 to 2011. In 1990, 15 percent were proficient or above; in 2011, it was 35 percent. (See graph 22.)

• The proportion of eighth-grade students who were “below basic” declined from 48 percent in 1990 to 27 percent in 2011. (See graph 22.)

• The scores of white students, black students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and American Indian students in eighth grade were higher in 2011 than in 1992.

As it happens, there is another version of NAEP that the federal government has administered since the early 1970s. The one I described before is known as the “main NAEP.” It tests students in grades 4 and 8; scores on the main NAEP reach back to 1990 or 1992, depending on the subject. It is periodically revised and updated. The alternative form of NAEP is called the “long-term trend assessment.” It dates back to the early 1970s and tests students who are ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen (which roughly corresponds to grades 4, 8, and 12). The long-term trend NAEP contains large numbers of questions that have been used consistently for more than forty years. Unlike the main NAEP, the content of the long-term trend NAEP seldom changes, other than to remove obsolete terms like “S& H Green Stamps.” The long-term trend NAEP is administered to scientific samples of students every four years. Both the main NAEP and the long-term trend NAEP show steady increases in reading and mathematics. Neither shows declines. The long-term tests hardly ever change, so they provide a consistent yardstick over the past four decades. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1123-1131). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Poverty drives the achievement gap – can’t overcome just by school repairs

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The black-white achievement gap is now smaller than the achievement gap between the poorest and the most affluent students, according to the sociologist Sean Reardon of Stanford University. Strikingly, he found that “the achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40 percent larger among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years earlier. In fact, it appears that the income achievement gap has been growing for at least fifty years, though the data are less certain for cohorts of children born before 1970.” In contrast to the racial achievement gap, which has narrowed, the income achievement gap is growing. In fact, he found that the income achievement gap was nearly twice as large as the black-white achievement gap; the reverse was true fifty years earlier. The income achievement gap is already large when children start school, and according to the work of other researchers it “does not appear to grow (or narrow) appreciably as children progress through school.” Reardon suggests that the income-based gap is growing in part because affluent families invest in their children’s cognitive development, with tutoring, summer camp, computers, and other enriching experiences. He concludes that “family income is now nearly as strong as parental education in predicting children’s achievement.” 5 Thomas B. Timar of the University of California reviewed the efforts to close the black-white achievement gap and the Hispanic-white achievement gap and concluded that while there had been progress, the overall situation was discouraging. Why was there so little progress? He wrote: “One reason is that although schools can be held accountable for some of the disadvantage these students experience, they have been given the entire responsibility for closing the achievement gap [emphasis mine]. Yet the gap is the symptom of larger social, economic and political problems that go far beyond the reach of the school … While schools are part of the solution, they alone cannot solve the problem of educational disparities.” 6 Another reason for the persistence of the gaps, Timar writes, is that policy makers have invested in strategies for thirty years that are “misdirected and ineffectual,” managing to keep urban schools in a state of “policy spin,” bouncing from one idea to another but never attaining the learning conditions or social capital that might make a difference. Schools can’t solve the problem alone, Timar acknowledges, as long as society ignores the high levels of poverty and racial isolation in which many of these youngsters live. He writes of children growing up in neighborhoods that experience high rates of crime and incarceration, violence, and stress-related disorders. In the current version of reform, fixing schools means more legislation, more mandates, and more regulations. What is missing from reform, he says, is an appreciation for the value of local and regional efforts, the small-scale programs that rely on local initiative for implementation. Without local initiative, reforms cannot succeed. Of great importance in creating lasting change is social capital, Timar notes. This is the capital that grows because of relationships within the school and between the school and the community. Social capital is a necessary ingredient of reform, and it is built on a sense of community, organizational stability, and trust. Successful schools in distressed communities have stable leadership and a shared vision for change. They have “a sense of purpose, a coherent plan, and individuals with responsibility to coordinate and implement the plan. Teachers worked collaboratively to improve teaching and learning across the entire school curriculum … School improvement wasn’t something done to them (like some sort of medical procedure), but a collaborative undertaking. Students also realized that the school’s engagement in school improvement activities was meant for them, for their benefit.” 7 If we are serious about significantly narrowing the achievement gaps between black and white students, Hispanic and white students, and poor and affluent students, then we need to think in terms of long-term, comprehensive strategies. Those strategies must address the problems of poverty, unemployment, racial isolation, and mass incarceration. Income inequality in the United States, he points out, cannot be ignored, since it is greater now than at any time since the 1920s and more extreme than in any other advanced nation. But American politics has grown so politically conservative and unwilling to address structural issues that the chances of this happening are slim.

Timar believes that the best hope for a school-based strategy for reducing the gaps lies in a grassroots model of change. He points to approaches like the Comer Process, developed by Dr. James Comer of Yale University, which engages the school community in meeting the emotional, psychological, social, and academic needs of students. What works best is not regulation and mandates but professional collaboration, community building, and cooperation. Such a scenario can happen only when those in the school have the authority to design their own improvement plans and act without waiting for instructions or permission from Washington or the state capital. What we know from these scholars makes sense. The achievement gaps are rooted in social, political, and economic structures. If we are unwilling to change the root causes, we are unlikely ever to close the gaps. What we call achievement gaps are in fact opportunity gaps. Our corporate reformers insist that we must “fix” schools first, not poverty. But the weight of evidence is against them. No serious social scientist believes that rearranging the organization or control or curriculum of schools will suffice to create income equality or to end poverty. The schools did not cause the achievement gaps, and the schools alone are not powerful enough to close them. So long as our society is indifferent to poverty, so long as we are willing to look the other way rather than act vigorously to improve the conditions of families and communities, there will always be achievement gaps. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1319-1323). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Crisis rhetoric used to enable privatization

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Today, critics use data from international assessments to generate a crisis mentality, not to improve public schools but to undermine public confidence in them. To the extent that they accomplish this, the public will be more tolerant of efforts to dismantle public education and divert public funding to privately managed schools and for-profit vendors of instruction.

### A2: Minority Students Failing

#### Minority scores have increased

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Here are the changes in the long-term trend data in mathematics, from 1973 to 2008: The overall score does not reflect the large gains that were made over the past four decades, again because of Simpson’s paradox. Each of the four major groups of students saw significant gains. (See graphs 28 and 29.) White students over the past forty years show impressive gains: age nine, up 25 points; age thirteen, up 16 points; age seventeen, up 4 points. Black students over the past forty years show remarkable gains: age nine, up 34 points; age thirteen, up 34 points; age seventeen, up 17 points. Hispanic students also show remarkable gains: age nine, up 32 points; age thirteen, up 29 points; age seventeen, up 16 points. On the main NAEP, from 1990 to 2011, here are the data for mathematics: White students: fourth grade, up 29 points; eighth grade, up 23 points. (See graphs 16 and 23.) Black students: fourth grade, up 36 points; eighth grade, up 25 points. (See graphs 16 and 23.) Hispanic students: fourth grade, up 29 points; eighth grade, up 24 points. (See graphs 17 and 24.) Asian students: fourth grade, up 31 points; eighth grade, up 28 points. (See graphs 18 and 25.) In reading, the changes are less dramatic, but they are steady and significant. On the long-term trend assessments, these were the changes in reading from 1971 to 2008:

White students: age nine, up 14 points; age thirteen, up 7 points; age seventeen, up 4 points. Black students: age nine, up 34 points; age thirteen, up 25 points; age seventeen, up 28 points. Hispanic students: age nine, up 25 points; age thirteen, up 10 points; age seventeen, up 17 points. Compare this with gains on the main NAEP reading from 1992 to 2011: White students: fourth grade, up 7 points; eighth grade, up 7 points. (See graphs 7 and 12.) Black students: fourth grade, up 13 points; eighth grade, up 12 points. (See graphs 7 and 12.) Hispanic students: fourth grade, up 9 points; eighth grade, up 11 points. (See graphs 8 and 13.) Asian students: fourth grade, up 19 points; eighth grade, up 7 points. (See graphs 9 and 14.) Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1152-1155). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Minority scores improving

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Reformers make the case for privatization by insisting that black and Hispanic students are failing in the public schools and that they must be “saved.” Reformers often say that African American and Hispanic students have made no progress for decades. But this is not true. The scores of black students in fourth-grade math increased dramatically in the two decades after 1990, when the federal tests were first offered; black student achievement was higher in 2009 than white student achievement in 1990. In addition, over this past generation there has been a remarkable decline in the proportion of African American and Hispanic students who register “below basic,” the lowest possible academic rating on the NAEP tests. If white achievement had stood still, the achievement gap would be closed by now, but of course white achievement has also improved, so the gap remains large. In mathematics, over the past two decades, all students made dramatic progress. In 1990, 83 percent of black students in fourth grade scored “below basic,” but that number fell to 34 percent in 2011. In eighth grade, 78 percent of black students were below basic in 1990, but by 2011 the proportion had dropped to 49 percent. Among Hispanic students, the proportion below basic in fourth grade fell from 67 percent to 28 percent; in eighth grade, that proportion declined from 66 percent to 39 percent. Among white students in fourth grade, the proportion below basic dropped in that time period from 41 percent to only 9 percent; in eighth grade, it declined from 40 percent to 16 percent. The proportion of fourth-grade Asian students below basic dropped from 38 percent in 1990 to 9 percent in 2011; in eighth grade, Asian students who were below basic declined from 36 percent to 14 percent. (See graphs 20 and 27.) This is truly remarkable progress. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1198-1201). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

The changes in reading scores were not as dramatic as in math, but they nonetheless are impressive. In fourth-grade reading, the proportion of black students who were below basic in 1992 was 68 percent; by 2011, it was down to 51 percent. In eighth grade, the proportion of black students who were reading below basic was 55 percent; that had declined to 41 percent by 2011. Among fourth-grade white students, the proportion below basic declined from 29 percent to 22 percent in the same twenty-year period. Among fourth-grade Hispanic students, the proportion reading below basic dropped from 62 percent to 49 percent. Among eighth-grade Hispanic students, the proportion reading below basic declined from 51 percent to 36 percent. Among fourth-grade Asian students, the proportion below basic fell from 40 percent to 20 percent. In the eighth grade, it declined from 24 percent to 17 percent. (See graphs 30 and 31 for all racial, ethnic groups.) Clearly, performance on NAEP is not flat. The gains in reading have been slow, steady, and significant. The gains in mathematics in both tested grades have been remarkable for whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1205-1209). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### The gap remains because all groups are improving

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Despite these increases, the achievement gaps remain between white and black students and between white and Hispanic students because all groups are improving their scores. Asian students perform as well as white students in reading and better than white students in math. Reformers ignore these gains and castigate the public schools for the persistence of the gap. Closing the racial achievement gap has been a major policy goal of education policy makers for at least the past decade.

### A2: US Students Failing on International, Standardized Tests

#### FInland pays no attention to standardized testing and their students still do well on standardized tests

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Some of our policy makers look longingly at the test scores of Singapore, Japan, and South Korea even as those nations look to us and try to figure out how to make their schools more attentive to creativity and inquiry-based learning. Others look to Finland as a model, ignoring the fact that educators in Finland do not share our national obsession with testing. Finnish educators profess not to care about their standing on the international tests, other than to note that doing well protects their schools from demands for testing and accountability. Unlike us, the Finns place a high premium on creativity, the arts, and problem solving and still manage to do well on international tests, without subjecting their students to a steady diet of standardized testing. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1448-1453). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### A2: 2010 PISA

#### 2010 PISA results misreported

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

In 2010, the release of the international assessments called PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) provided a new occasion for lamenting the mediocre performance of American students. Sixty countries, including thirty-four members of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), participated in the international assessment of fifteen-year-olds in reading, mathematics, and science. Students in Shanghai ranked first in all three subjects (Shanghai is not representative of China, which did not participate in the assessments). Of the OECD nations, the United States ranked fourteenth in reading, seventeenth in science, and twenty-fifth in mathematics (these rankings are overstated because the United States was in a statistical tie with several other nations on each test). The media, elected officials, and think tank pundits reacted with shock and alarm. President Obama said it was “our generation’s Sputnik moment” and warned that we were losing ground to economic competitors in India and China (neither of which participated in the international tests). Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said the results were “a wake-up call” to the nation. 2 Editorialists were alarmed that Shanghai had scored at the top, which seemed to symbolize a new era of Chinese supremacy. The front-page story in The New York Times carried the headline “Top Test Scores from Shanghai Stun Educators.” The Chinese-born educator Yong Zhao, now a professor at the University of Oregon, cautioned Americans that China had long ago perfected the art of test taking, and Chinese parents were not happy with this practice, but his voice did not reach as many people as did the major media. 3 Examined closely, the scores reveal two salient points. First, the scores of American fifteen-year-olds had not declined. In reading and mathematics, the U.S. scores were not measurably different from earlier PISA assessments in 2000, 2003, and 2006. In science, U.S. students improved their scores over an earlier assessment in 2006.

Second, American students in schools with low poverty— the schools where less than 10 percent of the students were poor— had scores that were equal to those of Shanghai and significantly better than those of high-scoring Finland, the Republic of Korea, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and Australia. In U.S. schools where less than a quarter of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (the federal definition of poverty), the reading scores were similar to those of students in high-performing nations. Technically, the comparison is not valid, because it involves comparing students in low-poverty schools in the United States with the average score for entire nations. But it is important to recognize that the scores of students in low-poverty schools in the United States are far higher than the international average, higher even than the average for top-performing nations, and the scores decline as poverty levels increase, as they do in all nations. Two scholars, Martin Carnoy and Richard Rothstein, asserted that the international testing agency had made a sampling error, assuming far higher levels of poverty in American schools than was the case; when the scores were readjusted appropriately, they argued, the United States was actually fourth in the world in reading and tenth in the world in mathematics. 5 Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1369-1372). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### A2: 2012 TIMMS

#### Americans also did well on the TIMMS test

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

In 2012, the results of the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), the major international assessments of mathematics and science, were released. American students have participated in TIMSS since 1995. The major American media presented the 2012 results in a negative light, reflecting the reformers’ gloomy narrative. The headline in The New York Times read, “U.S. Students Still Lag Globally in Math and Science, Tests Show.” The Washington Post ran the headline “U.S. Students Continue to Trail Asian Students in Math, Reading, Science.” 9 But the media were wrong. American students performed surprisingly well in mathematics and science, well above the international average in both subjects in grades 4 and 8. Two American states (Florida and North Carolina) volunteered to take the TIMSS tests in fourth grade, and another seven states took the tests in eighth grade, to gauge how they were doing by international standards. 10 In fourth-grade mathematics, U.S. students outperformed most of the fifty-seven educational systems that participated. American students were tied with their peers in Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, England, and Russia. South Korea, Singapore, and Japan were the only nations that outperformed fourth-grade students in the United States (as did certain regions, like Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei). American students outperformed their peers in such nations as Germany, Norway, Hungary, Australia, and New Zealand. North Carolina ranked as one of the top-performing entities in the world. In eighth-grade mathematics, U.S. students also did very well. They were tied with their peers in Israel, Finland, Australia, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, and England. The only nations that outperformed the United States were Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Russia (along with the two Chinese regions noted above). Students in four American states that offered to take the tests ranked among the world’s highest-performing entities: Massachusetts, Minnesota, Indiana, and North Carolina. Black students in Massachusetts received the same scores as students in Israel and Finland. Imagine that! It should have been a front-page story across the nation, but it was not. In fourth-grade science, American students ranked in the top ten systems of the fifty-seven that took the test. Only South Korea, Japan, Finland, Russia, and Singapore ranked higher (along with Chinese Taipei). In eighth-grade science, American students were outperformed by only six nations (Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Finland, and Slovenia, along with Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei) and tied with those in England, Hungary, Israel, and Australia. The states of Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Colorado, which volunteered to participate in TIMSS, ranked among the top-performing nations in the world. Massachusetts, had it been an independent nation, would have been ranked second in the world, behind Singapore. Four dozen nations participated in the latest international reading assessment called PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). Fourth-grade students in the United States were among the top performers in the world, ranked behind only Hong Kong, Russia, Finland, and Singapore. The only U.S. state to participate, Florida, scored behind Hong Kong; if it were a nation, Florida would have been tied for second in the world with Russia, Finland, and Singapore. 11 So, contrary to the loud complaints of the reform chorus, American students are doing quite well in comparison to those of other advanced nations. Are the test scores of American students falling? No. Between 1995 and 2011, the mathematics scores of our students in fourth grade and eighth grade increased significantly. In science, the scores did not fall; they were about the same in both years. In reading, the scores increased from 2001 to 2011.12 Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1423-1432). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

# Standardized Tests Bad -- Privatization

### Privatization

#### Testing supports educational privatization and undermines focusing solutions on poverty in schools

Brand 13 — Candice Brand, Assistant Editor and Reporter for Truthout, a progressive news organization that works to broaden and diversify the political discussion by introducing independent voices, co-writer and producer of *Don't Frack With Denton*, a documentary chronicling fracking in Texas. Truthout has featured content from Paul Krugman, Henry Giroux, Bill Moyers, Andy Worthington, Kathy Kelly, Dean Baker and Noam Chomsky, 2013 (“Flow Chart Exposes Common Core's Myriad Corporate Connections,” Truthout, September 6th, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/18442-flow-chart-exposes-common-cores-myr, Accessed 06-22-2015)

Morna McDermott mapped the Common Core State Standard Initiative's corporate connections in a new flow chart, which reveals how corporations and organizations that are members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) have funded and perpetuated Common Core standards throughout the states.

ALEC has been funded for decades in large part by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch. According to the Center for Media and Democracy, about 98 percent of ALEC's funds come from corporations such as Exxon Mobil and corporate foundations like the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation.

The Common Core State Standard Initiative is part of the larger Race to the Top educational policy announced by President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan in 2009. It seeks to implement new Common Core educational benchmarks to replace varying educational standards from state to state by awarding grants to states that comply with the initiative. The standards have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The chart illuminates a larger corporate agenda that seeks market-based education reforms and increased influence over public education in the United States. With defense and security expenditures slowing, corporations are looking to profit from new cloud-based software used to collect and mine information from student records to create individualized education programs designed by third-party companies.

McDermott is a teacher-educator with more than 20 years of experience working in and with public schools. McDermott also serves as a section editor for the Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy and recently published a book titled "The Left Handed Curriculum: Creative Experiences for Empowering Teachers" with Information Age Publishing. She is an administrator with United Opt Out National, a nonprofit created by parents, educators and students who are dedicated to the elimination of high-stakes testing in public education.

She researched and produced the information on her own, but the work is endorsed and supported by the United Opt Out National network. McDermott told Truthout she used a systems-based approach in her research to show the concepts in relationship to one another, and that it's just another example of a different method of teaching and learning.

McDermott says she works to fight standards and testing because they divert funds and attention away from the real issue in education, which is poverty. "The whole thing about better tests and if we had better standards is like a bait-and-switch … so nobody pays attention to the real issues," she said.

McDermott mentions a number of corporations and organizations prying for influence over the Common Core standards. Among them is Achieve Inc., a company widely funded by ALEC members, including Boeing and State Farm, among others.

McDermott also points to peer-reviewed academic research originally published in the International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation by Fenwick English titled "The Ten Most Wanted Enemies of American Public Education's School Leadership." In his research English looks at many of the players involved in the same network that McDermott maps with clarity, writing of the Eli Broad Foundation that:

Broad money is sloshed behind the scenes to elect or select candidates who "buy" the Broad corporate agenda in education. ... Broad's enemies are teacher unions, school boards, and schools of education. What all three have in common is that they eschew corporate, top-down control required in the Broad business model.

According to McDermott, America's Choice, another part of Common Core's corporate web, originally was founded as a program of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit. But in 2004, the group was reorganized as a for-profit subsidiary of NCEE.

McDermott cites a professor of education reform at the University of Arkansas, Jay Greene, who writes:

NCEE's scheme was originally financed by a $1,500,000 pilot grant from the Gates Foundation. It will now benefit from a sweetheart deal of $30,000,000 - all taxpayers' money. Having Gates pay for both NCEE's start-up and the development of Common Core standards certainly helped America's Choice to put its key people on Common Core's [English Language Arts] and mathematics standards development and draft-writing committees to ensure that they came up with the readiness standards Gates had paid for and wanted NCEE to use.

It's all part-and-parcel to the larger neoliberal plan to "reform" public education.

"What Race to the Top is doing to exacerbate the issues of poverty, for one thing, in terms of school funding is it's even elevating the amount of money that is funneled right through schools, like a sieve, and channeling it more directly into the hands of testing companies, computer companies, online companies and other corporate interests," McDermott said. "So for a state or a district to say, 'Oh, we need the money,' my reaction would be, 'You're not going to see a dime of it. They're going to hand you a check that's basically a coupon to buy Pearson products.' "

### Corporate Control Bad

#### Corporate control risks extinction — *global warming* and *nuclear war*.

Chomsky 14 — Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society, holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania 2014 (“America’s corporate doctrine of power a grave threat to humanity,” *Salon* — originally published on *TomDispatch*, July 1st, Available Online at <http://www.salon.com/2014/07/01/noam_chomsky_americas_corporate_doctrine_of_power_a_grave_threat_to_humanity/>, Accessed 07-09-2015)

The Final Century of Human Civilization?

There are other examples too numerous to mention, facts that are well-established and would be taught in elementary schools in free societies.

There is, in other words, ample evidence that securing state power from the domestic population and securing concentrated private power are driving forces in policy formation. Of course, it is not quite that simple. There are interesting cases, some quite current, where these commitments conflict, but consider this a good first approximation and radically opposed to the received standard doctrine.

Let us turn to another question: What about the security of the population? It is easy to demonstrate that this is a marginal concern of policy planners. Take two prominent current examples, global warming and nuclear weapons. As any literate person is doubtless aware, these are dire threats to the security of the population. Turning to state policy, we find that it is committed to accelerating each of those threats — in the interests of the primary concerns, protection of state power and of the concentrated private power that largely determines state policy.

Consider global warming. There is now much exuberance in the United States about “100 years of energy independence” as we become “the Saudi Arabia of the next century” — perhaps the final century of human civilization if current policies persist.

That illustrates very clearly the nature of the concern for security, certainly not for the population. It also illustrates the moral calculus of contemporary Anglo-American state capitalism: the fate of our grandchildren counts as nothing when compared with the imperative of higher profits tomorrow.

These conclusions are fortified by a closer look at the propaganda system. There is a huge public relations campaign in the U.S., organized quite openly by Big Energy and the business world, to try to convince the public that global warming is either unreal or not a result of human activity. And it has had some impact. The U.S. ranks lower than other countries in public concern about global warming and the results are stratified: among Republicans, the party more fully dedicated to the interests of wealth and corporate power, it ranks far lower than the global norm.

The current issue of the premier journal of media criticism, the Columbia Journalism Review, has an interesting article on this subject, attributing this outcome to the media doctrine of “fair and balanced.” In other words, if a journal publishes an opinion piece reflecting the conclusions of 97% of scientists, it must also run a counter-piece expressing the viewpoint of the energy corporations.

That indeed is what happens, but there certainly is no “fair and balanced” doctrine. Thus, if a journal runs an opinion piece denouncing Russian President Vladimir Putin for the criminal act of taking over the Crimea, it surely does not have to run a piece pointing out that, while the act is indeed criminal, Russia has a far stronger case today than the U.S. did more than a century ago in taking over southeastern Cuba, including the country’s major port — and rejecting the Cuban demand since independence to have it returned. And the same is true of many other cases. The actual media doctrine is “fair and balanced” when the concerns of concentrated private power are involved, but surely not elsewhere.

On the issue of nuclear weapons, the record is similarly interesting — and frightening. It reveals very clearly that, from the earliest days, the security of the population was a non-issue, and remains so. There is no time here to run through the shocking record, but there is little doubt that it strongly supports the lament of General Lee Butler, the last commander of the Strategic Air Command, which was armed with nuclear weapons. In his words, we have so far survived the nuclear age “by some combination of skill, luck, and divine intervention, and I suspect the latter in greatest proportion.” And we can hardly count on continued divine intervention as policymakers play roulette with the fate of the species in pursuit of the driving factors in policy formation.

As we are all surely aware, we now face the most ominous decisions in human history. There are many problems that must be addressed, but two are overwhelming in their significance: environmental destruction and nuclear war. For the first time in history, we face the possibility of destroying the prospects for decent existence — and not in the distant future. For this reason alone, it is imperative to sweep away the ideological clouds and face honestly and realistically the question of how policy decisions are made, and what we can do to alter them before it is too late.

#### Training students to become corporate careerists threatens *extinction*.

Hedges 12 — Chris Hedges, Fellow at The Nation Institute, F. Ross Johnson-Connaught Distinguished Visitor in American Studies at the Centre for the Study of the United States at The University of Toronto, long-time foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* where he was part of a team of reporters that won a Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the war on terrorism, recipient of the Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism, holds a B.A. in English Literature from Colgate University and a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, 2012 (“The Careerists,” *Truthdig*—A Progressive Journal of News and Opinion, July 23rd, Available Online at http://www.truthdig.com/report/print/the\_careerists\_20120723, Accessed 07-09-2015)

The greatest crimes of human history are made possible by the most colorless human beings. They are the careerists. The bureaucrats. The cynics. They do the little chores that make vast, complicated systems of exploitation and death a reality. They collect and read the personal data gathered on tens of millions of us by the security and surveillance state. They keep the accounts of ExxonMobil, BP and Goldman Sachs. They build or pilot aerial drones. They work in corporate advertising and public relations. They issue the forms. They process the papers. They deny food stamps to some and unemployment benefits or medical coverage to others. They enforce the laws and the regulations. And they do not ask questions.

Good. Evil. These words do not mean anything to them. They are beyond morality. They are there to make corporate systems function. If insurance companies abandon tens of millions of sick to suffer and die, so be it. If banks and sheriff departments toss families out of their homes, so be it. If financial firms rob citizens of their savings, so be it. If the government shuts down schools and libraries, so be it. If the military murders children in Pakistan or Afghanistan, so be it. If commodity speculators drive up the cost of rice and corn and wheat so that they are unaffordable for hundreds of millions of poor across the planet, so be it. If Congress and the courts strip citizens of basic civil liberties, so be it. If the fossil fuel industry turns the earth into a broiler of greenhouse gases that doom us, so be it. They serve the system. The god of profit and exploitation. The most dangerous force in the industrialized world does not come from those who wield radical creeds, whether Islamic radicalism or Christian fundamentalism, but from legions of faceless bureaucrats who claw their way up layered corporate and governmental machines. They serve any system that meets their pathetic quota of needs.

These systems managers believe nothing. They have no loyalty. They are rootless. They do not think beyond their tiny, insignificant roles. They are blind and deaf. They are, at least regarding the great ideas and patterns of human civilization and history, utterly illiterate. And we churn them out of universities. Lawyers. Technocrats. Business majors. Financial managers. IT specialists. Consultants. Petroleum engineers. “Positive psychologists.” Communications majors. Cadets. Sales representatives. Computer programmers. Men and women who know no history, know no ideas. They live and think in an intellectual vacuum, a world of stultifying minutia. They are T.S. Eliot’s “the hollow men,” “the stuffed men.” “Shape without form, shade without colour,” the poet wrote. “Paralysed force, gesture without motion.”

It was the careerists who made possible the genocides, from the extermination of Native Americans to the Turkish slaughter of the Armenians to the Nazi Holocaust to Stalin’s liquidations. They were the ones who kept the trains running. They filled out the forms and presided over the property confiscations. They rationed the food while children starved. They manufactured the guns. They ran the prisons. They enforced travel bans, confiscated passports, seized bank accounts and carried out segregation. They enforced the law. They did their jobs.

Political and military careerists, backed by war profiteers, have led us into useless wars, including World War I, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. And millions followed them. Duty. Honor. Country. Carnivals of death. They sacrifice us all. In the futile battles of Verdun and the Somme in World War I, 1.8 million on both sides were killed, wounded or never found. In July of 1917 British Field Marshal Douglas Haig, despite the seas of dead, doomed even more in the mud of Passchendaele. By November, when it was clear his promised breakthrough at Passchendaele had failed, he jettisoned the initial goal—as we did in Iraq when it turned out there were no weapons of mass destruction and in Afghanistan when al-Qaida left the country—and opted for a simple war of attrition. Haig “won” if more Germans than allied troops died. Death as score card. Passchendaele took 600,000 more lives on both sides of the line before it ended. It is not a new story. Generals are almost always buffoons. Soldiers followed John the Blind, who had lost his eyesight a decade earlier, to resounding defeat at the Battle of Crécy in 1337 during the Hundred Years War. We discover that leaders are mediocrities only when it is too late.

David Lloyd George, who was the British prime minister during the Passchendaele campaign, wrote in his memoirs: “[Before the battle of Passchendaele] the Tanks Corps Staff prepared maps to show how a bombardment which obliterated the drainage would inevitably lead to a series of pools, and they located the exact spots where the waters would gather. The only reply was a peremptory order that they were to ‘Send no more of these ridiculous maps.’ Maps must conform to plans and not plans to maps. Facts that interfered with plans were impertinencies.”

Here you have the explanation of why our ruling elites do nothing about climate change, refuse to respond rationally to economic meltdown and are incapable of coping with the collapse of globalization and empire. These are circumstances that interfere with the very viability and sustainability of the system. And bureaucrats know only how to serve the system. They know only the managerial skills they ingested at West Point or Harvard Business School. They cannot think on their own. They cannot challenge assumptions or structures. They cannot intellectually or emotionally recognize that the system might implode. And so they do what Napoleon warned was the worst mistake a general could make—paint an imaginary picture of a situation and accept it as real. But we blithely ignore reality along with them. The mania for a happy ending blinds us. We do not want to believe what we see. It is too depressing. So we all retreat into collective self-delusion.

In Claude Lanzmann’s monumental documentary film “Shoah,” on the Holocaust, he interviews Filip Müller, a Czech Jew who survived the liquidations in Auschwitz as a member of the “special detail.” Müller relates this story:

“One day in 1943 when I was already in Crematorium 5, a train from Bialystok arrived. A prisoner on the ‘special detail’ saw a woman in the ‘undressing room’ who was the wife of a friend of his. He came right out and told her: ‘You are going to be exterminated. In three hours you’ll be ashes.’ The woman believed him because she knew him. She ran all over and warned to the other women. ‘We’re going to be killed. We’re going to be gassed.’ Mothers carrying their children on their shoulders didn’t want to hear that. They decided the woman was crazy. They chased her away. So she went to the men. To no avail. Not that they didn’t believe her. They’d heard rumors in the Bialystok ghetto, or in Grodno, and elsewhere. But who wanted to hear that? When she saw that no one would listen, she scratched her whole face. Out of despair. In shock. And she started to scream.”

Blaise Pascal wrote in “Pensées,” “We run heedlessly into the abyss after putting something in front of us to stop us from seeing it.”

Hannah Arendt, in writing “Eichmann in Jerusalem,” noted that Adolf Eichmann was primarily motivated by “an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement.” He joined the Nazi Party because it was a good career move. “The trouble with Eichmann,” she wrote, “was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.”

“The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else,” Arendt wrote. “No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.”

Gitta Sereny makes the same point in her book “Into That Darkness,” about Franz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka. The assignment to the SS was a promotion for the Austrian policeman. Stangl was not a sadist. He was soft-spoken and polite. He loved his wife and children very much. Unlike most Nazi camp officers, he did not take Jewish women as concubines. He was efficient and highly organized. He took pride in having received an official commendation as the “best camp commander in Poland.” Prisoners were simply objects. Goods. “That was my profession,” he said. “I enjoyed it. It fulfilled me. And yes, I was ambitious about that, I won’t deny it.” When Sereny asked Stangl how as a father he could kill children, he answered that he “rarely saw them as individuals. It was always a huge mass. … [T]hey were naked, packed together, running, being driven with whips. …” He later told Sereny that when he read about lemmings it reminded him of Treblinka.

Christopher Browning’s collection of essays, “The Path to Genocide,” notes that it was the “moderate,” “normal” bureaucrats, not the zealots, who made the Holocaust possible. Germaine Tillion pointed out “the tragic easiness [during the Holocaust] with which ‘decent’ people could become the most callous executioners without seeming to notice what was happening to them.” The Russian novelist Vasily Grossman in his book “Forever Flowing” observed that “the new state did not require holy apostles, fanatic, inspired builders, faithful, devout disciples. The new state did not even require servants—just clerks.”

“The most nauseating type of S.S. were to me personally the cynics who no longer genuinely believed in their cause, but went on collecting blood guilt for its own sake,” wrote Dr. Ella Lingens-Reiner in “Prisoners of Fear,” her searing memoir of Auschwitz. “Those cynics were not always brutal to the prisoners, their behavior changed with their mood. They took nothing seriously—neither themselves nor their cause, neither us nor our situation. One of the worst among them was Dr. Mengele, the Camp Doctor I have mentioned before. When a batch of newly arrived Jews was being classified into those fit for work and those fit for death, he would whistle a melody and rhythmically jerk his thumb over his right or his left shoulder—which meant ‘gas’ or ‘work.’ He thought conditions in the camp rotten, and even did a few things to improve them, but at the same time he committed murder callously, without any qualms.”

These armies of bureaucrats serve a corporate system that will quite literally kill us. They are as cold and disconnected as Mengele. They carry out minute tasks. They are docile. Compliant. They obey. They find their self-worth in the prestige and power of the corporation, in the status of their positions and in their career promotions. They assure themselves of their own goodness through their private acts as husbands, wives, mothers and fathers. They sit on school boards. They go to Rotary. They attend church. It is moral schizophrenia. They erect walls to create an isolated consciousness. They make the lethal goals of ExxonMobil or Goldman Sachs or Raytheon or insurance companies possible. They destroy the ecosystem, the economy and the body politic and turn workingmen and -women into impoverished serfs. They feel nothing. Metaphysical naiveté always ends in murder. It fragments the world. Little acts of kindness and charity mask the monstrous evil they abet. And the system rolls forward. The polar ice caps melt. The droughts rage over cropland. The drones deliver death from the sky. The state moves inexorably forward to place us in chains. The sick die. The poor starve. The prisons fill. And the careerist, plodding forward, does his or her job.

### Data Driven Approaches Destroy Value to Life

#### The data-driven life is devoid of quality — we become automotons.

Feiler 14 — Bruce Feiler, writer for numerous publications, including The New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine, and Gourmet, where he won three James Beard Awards, contributor to NPR, ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN and Fox News, author of 6 NYT bestsellers on education, families and success, 2014 ("The United States of Metrics," New York Times, May 16th, Available Online at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/fashion/the-united-states-of-metrics.html?\_r=1, Accessed 7-6-2015)

In the last few years, there has been a revolution so profound that it’s sometimes hard to miss its significance. We are awash in numbers. Data is everywhere. Old-fashioned things like words are in retreat; numbers are on the rise. Unquantifiable arenas like history, literature, religion and the arts are receding from public life, replaced by technology, statistics, science and math. Even the most elemental form of communication, the story, is being pushed aside by the list.

The results are in: The nerds have won. Time to replace those arrows in the talons of the American eagle with pencils and slide rules. We’ve become the United States of Metrics.

Given our new obsessions with numbers, you’re probably eager for some statistics to back up this argument. (Actually, by this point, you’ve probably already stopped reading. A study by the Internet data company Chartbeat looked at “deep user behavior” across two billion web visits and found that 55 percent of readers spent fewer than 15 seconds on a page.)

In any event, here goes:

HEALTH Sixty-nine percent of Americans track their weight, diet or exercise, while a third track their blood pressure, sleep patterns and headaches. The market for digital fitness devices brought in $330 million last year and is expected to double this year. Samsung just added a heart-rate monitor to its popular Galaxy line of phones. The No. 1 paid app on iTunes this spring is the Sleep Cycle Alarm Clock, which monitors the amount and quality of winks you get and wakes you during a light phase of your cycle. The app is the top seller in every G-8 country.

SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook is the king of metrics. The site counts the number of friends (average 338), the number of likes on each status report, the number of comments on each report and the number of likes on each comment. Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Foursquare and Tumblr all tally your followers and connections, along with the number of pass-alongs, favorites and responses. Want to know how influential you are on social media? Klout and Kred use analytics to rank your impact. Five hundred million users have calculated their Klout score on a scale from 1 to 100.

SOCIAL SCIENCE That God-shaped hole in the universe? It’s been filled with social science. Whereas once we quoted politicians or preachers, now we quote Gallup or Pew. (Actually, few neologisms better capture the change in the United States in the last 50 years than the move from pew to Pew.) There’s a study, poll or survey for everything these days. TED Talks, the headquarters of this movement, have been viewed more than a billion times, and talks are ranked by views. The hottest nonfiction book this spring is “Capital in the 21st Century,” a 696-page economic tome by Thomas Piketty.

Every generation gets the gurus it craves. Ours include Malcolm Gladwell, Daniel Kahneman, Brené Brown, Jim Collins, Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, Dan Gilbert, Dan Pink, Dan Ariely and Nate Silver. What do they all have in common? They use research to tackle issues that were once the provenance of poets, theologians and philosophers. (Also, there’s a 40 percent chance they’re named Dan.)

SPORTS While sports fans have always loved statistics, the explosion of fantasy sports in recent years means that the statistics, in essence, now play one another. Fans assemble their own rosters of players from various teams, then those teams “compete” based on metrics. Thirty-two million people play fantasy sports each year. Offerings include baseball, football, rugby, professional wrestling, surfing, auto racing, hockey and golf. (There’s even a Fantasy Congress.) The economic impact is $4 billion a year.

LIFESTYLE The Quantified Self movement utilizes life-logging, wearable computing and other techniques to assemble what it calls “self-knowledge through numbers.” New York University just announced that it has teamed with Hudson Yards to create the nation’s first “quantified community.” Electronic monitors will collect data on such things as pedestrian traffic, air quality, energy consumption, composting compliance, even the physical activity of residents in order to build a “smart community.” The app Reporter pings you several times a day and asks you questions like “Where are you?,” “Who are you with?” and “What did you learn today?” The service then creates a graph of your life.

There’s even smart cutlery. HapiFork tracks how fast you eat. If you don’t pause 10 seconds between each bite, the utensil turns bright red and vibrates to slow you down.

Big Brother isn’t our big enemy anymore. It’s Big Self. That hovering eye in the sky watching every move you make: It’s you.

So what are the consequences of this new numerized world?

Duncan Watts, a social scientist at Microsoft Research and the author of “Everything Is Obvious,” welcomes the trend. He said all this new information enables better decisions.

“If you had to choose between a world in which you do everything based on instinct, tradition or some vague, received wisdom, or you do something based on evidence, I would say the latter is the way to go,” he said.

The challenge is coming up with the proper interpretation of the data, he said. Did you not get a full night’s sleep because you were mindlessly flipping channels or watching Internet porn, or because you were comforting a sick child or having a night of great sex the way they do in New Mexico?

“Coming up with the correct meaning is what’s hard,” Mr. Watts said.

Tony Haile, the chief executive of Chartbeat, which provides real-time analytics for ESPN, CNN and The New York Times Company, agrees. (In addition to studying readers’ habits, nearly every major news organization has invested in “data journalism,” the use of computerized tools to scan digital records, cull big data and visualize complex stories through three-dimensional charts and revolving infographics.) He said the benefits of metrics far outweigh the risks. Data provides what he calls a “sixth sense,” giving instant feedback that’s objective. A former tour guide to the North Pole, Mr. Haile measures his sleep, his exercise, his fat percentage and how many steps he takes each day.

“I do it because it’s fun,” he said. “I get a buzz when I see I’ve hit my 10,000 steps.”

Still, in the same way we never use one sense in isolation, Mr. Haile said, the same should apply to data.

“Just as looks can be deceiving, data can also be deceiving because they’re not the whole picture,” he said. “But it’s an important part of the picture and one we didn’t have before. I’m much less concerned about the data taking over as long as we remember that it’s an additional layer.”

Others, though, are concerned. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the statistician and former options trader who wrote the best-selling book “The Black Swan,” about unexpected events, said he believes the current obsession with metrics is a seductive trap.

“The evil here is not having metrics,” he said. “The problem is that you start trying to maximize every metric you have and reduce everything else.”

Mr. Taleb said he likes knowing how many kilograms of meat he’s buying, but if his meal is measured only by kilograms of meat and calories consumed, then dozens of other uncountable qualities, like the pleasure of the food or the quality of the conversation, go ignored.

“As a scientist, I can say that very little is measurable,” he said, “and even those things that are measurable, you cannot trust the measurement beyond a certain point.”

Many nonscientists are even more frustrated. Anne Lamott, the novelist and nonfiction writer whose best-selling books include “Bird by Bird” and “Traveling Mercies,” is concerned that the headlong rush into data is overshadowing “everything great and exciting that someone like me would dare to call grace.”

“What this stuff steals is our aliveness,” she said. “Grids, spreadsheets and algorithms take away the sensory connection to our lives, where our feet are, what we’re seeing, all the raw materials of life, which by their very nature are disorganized.” Metrics, she said, rob individuals of the sense that they can choose their own path, “because if you’re going by the data and the formula, there’s only one way.”

# Standardized Tests Bad -- Common Core Testing Bad

### Surveillance

#### Common core test data kept forever as part of an extensive surveillance system

Cook 13 — Joshua Cook, MBA, reporter, writer for BenSwann.com whose work has appeared on DrudgeReport, InfoWars, Breitbart.com, Daily Caller and FreedomOutpost.com, 2013 (“Common Core is the Most Dangerous Domestic Spying Program,” Freedom Outpost, September 2nd, Available Online at http://freedomoutpost.com/2013/09/common-core-dangerous-domestic-spying-program/#eBdFDCwK8D3U5h94.99, Accessed 06-22-2015)

Earlier this year, revelations about the Department of Justice spying on the Associated Press were quickly followed by revelations that the NSA was collecting phone data on all Verizon, and then all American cell phone users. Edward Snowden's whistleblowing drew yet more attention to the issue, and domestic surveillance programs have remained a top issue in people's minds ever since.

While Americans focus on institutions like the CIA and NSA, though, programs are being implemented which would lead to a much more institutional way of tracking citizens. Obamacare is one of these, but Common Core Standards – the federal educational program – is the most eyebrow-raising.

Bill Gates was one of the leaders of Common Core, putting his personal money into its development, implementation and promotion, so it's unsurprising that much of this data mining will occur via Microsoft's Cloud system.

Even the Department of Education, though, admits that privacy is a concern, and that some of the data gathered may be "of a sensitive nature." The information collected will be more than sensitive; much of it will also be completely unrelated to education. Data collected will not only include grades, test scores, name, date of birth and social security number, it will also include parents' political affiliations, individual or familial mental or psychological problems, beliefs, religious practices and income.

In addition, all activities, as well as those deemed demeaning, self-incriminating or anti-social, will be stored in students' school records. In other words, not only will permanently stored data reflect criminal activities, it will also reflect bullying or anything perceived as abnormal. The mere fact that the White House notes the program can be used to "automatically demonstrate proof of competency in a work setting" means such data is intended to affect students' futures.

Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that data collection will also include critical appraisals of individuals with whom students have close family relationships. The Common Core program has been heavily scrutinized recently for the fact that its curriculum teaches young children to use emotionally charged language to manipulate others and teaches students how to become community organizers and experts of the U.N.'s agenda 21.

Combined with this form of data collection, it's easy to envision truly disturbing untruths and distortions making their way into the permanent record.

Like Common Core, states were bribed with grant money from the federal government to implement data mining, and 47 states have now implemented some form of data mining from the educational system. Only 9 have implemented the full Common Core data mining program. Though there are restrictions which make storing data difficult on the federal level, states can easily store the data and allow the federal government to access it at its own discretion.

The government won't be the only organization with access to the information. School administrators have full control over student files, and they can choose who to share information with. Theoretically, the information could be sold, perhaps withholding identifying information. In addition, schools can share records with any "school official" without parental consent. The term "school official," however, includes private companies, which have contracts with the school.

NSA data mining is troubling because it could lead to intensely negative outcomes, because it opens up new avenues for control and because it is fundamentally wrong. Common Core data mining and tracking students with GPS devices is far, far scarier.

It gives the government the ability to completely control the futures of every student of public education, and that will soon extend to private and home schools. It provides a way to intimidate students – who already have a difficult time socially – into conforming to norms which are not only social, but also political and cultural.

#### Storage of scores makes it possible for corporate, non-academic interests to access them

Rugh 13 — Peter Rugh, Brooklyn-based reporter who contributes to Vice.com and is a correspondent for WagingNonviolence.org, 2013 (“Exposed: How Murdoch, Bill Gates and Big Corporations are Data Mining our Schools,” Truthout, May 2nd, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/16130-exposed-how-murdoch-bill-gates-and-big-corporations-are-data-mining-our-schools, Accessed 06-22-2015)

Last week, students across New York finished a set of tests taken over a two week period designed to measure their proficiency at reading and math against new federal college readiness standards known as Common Core. Some parents opted their children out of the exams in protest against what they described as the school system's over-emphasis on testing and its use of data as the principle indicator of their children's achievement.

Starting next year, those scores, along with students' personal information – race, economic background, report cards, discipline records and personal addresses – will be stored in a database designed by Wireless Generation, a subsidiary of media mogul Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

That's right, Rupert Murdoch can read your child's report card anytime he likes and he knows where your kid is sleeping. The database will be managed by inBloom inc, a non-profit outfit that, like Wireless Generation, is under the domain of billionaire Bill Gates – who, together with the Carnegie Corporation and other philanthropic organizations, set up the company via his Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

inBloom is receiving $50 million for their services from the New York Education Department through a contract awarded last fall. Data analyzing firms, educational software designers and other third-party venders, both for and not-for-profit, will be granted access to student information.

New York is not alone in turning to student data tracking system to measure performance. Some 200,000 U.S. teachers use Wireless Generation software as part of a national trend in which education administrators are increasingly turning to data analysis to grasp why America's pupils are flunking when compared to the rest of the world.

“I am a deep believer in the power of data to drive our decisions,” said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan shortly after his appointment to the post in 2008. “Data gives us the roadmap to reform. It tells us where we are, where we need to go, and who is most at risk.”

But the consolidation of individual student information has been raising eyebrows — and sparking a backlash. The Electronic Privacy Information Center is suing Duncan's Education Department for amending privacy regulations in 2011 that allow student data to be accessed for non-educational objectives without informing parents — a violation, EPIC contends, of the Family Educational Rights Privacy and Privacy Act.

According to inBloom's privacy policy, the company is not responsible for security breaches; though it will “use reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to ensure student records are kept private,” inBloom “cannot guarantee the security of the information stored in inBloom or that the information will not be intercepted when it is being transmitted.”

Last week, New York parents sent a letter to the Board of Regents, which oversees the state's public schools, decrying the “plan to share highly confidential, personally identifiable student data” with inBloom. They expressed fear that the company intends to share their children's information “with for-profit vendors without parental notification or consent.”

After parents in Louisiana raised similar concerns, plans to hand over student data to inBloom were put on hold two weeks ago. Contrary to statements from Louisiana Education Superintendent John White, the state has not cancelled its contract with the company, according to a spokesperson for inBloom.

The spokesperson also said it is up to inBloom's clients, not inBloom, to determine what data the company possesses and who is granted access. In Louisiana, that could include student social security numbers, which double as student ID digits in most districts.

Besides New York and Louisiana, inBloom has contracts with seven other states. All are part of the Shared Learning Collaborative, a pilot program set up by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to help implement Common Core standards through the tracking of student data. The Council of Chiefs, also a non-profit, is composed of the heads of America's state school systems who work together with corporations to collectively design education policy, in mold of the American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC.

CCSSO's corporate partners include Microsoft, Apple, Wireless Generation, IBM and Discovery Education – a spin-off of the television channel that gave us Amish Mafia. Then there are the big publishing houses: McGraw-Hill, Scholastic, and Pearson that design the standardized tests that produce the data which feeds inBloom, Wireless and others. Together, these tech, media and publishing corporations work with policymakers to integrate their products into curricula.

“I used to think there would be an uproar if I made this stuff public,” said one programmer who designs student tracking systems, and who wished to remain anonymous in order to protect his job. “Then, I discovered that it's all already public. They're devising extra-governmental systems to handle student learning right before our eyes. The state is using its monopoly on education to benefit certain corporations.”

Pearson, however, might have pushed its buddy-buddy relationship with education administrators a little too far. The publisher, which recently received a $32 million contract to design Common Core test prep materials for New York, is currently under investigation from the state Attorney General's office for using its nonprofit wing, the Pearson Foundation, to finance trips abroad taken by NYSED officials.

Yet, for the most part, by cloaking its aims in the guise of philanthropy the private sector has successfully nuzzled its way into the sphere of public education. And there are big bucks to be had.

“When it comes to K through 12 education,” Rupert Murdoch put it upon acquiring Wireless Generation in 2010, “we see a $500 billion sector in the U.S. alone that is waiting desperately to be transformed by big breakthroughs that extend the reach of great teaching.” To help ensure that News Corp. gets its share of the education pie (translation: "to extend the reach of great teaching"), the media baron tagged an industry insider to do his bidding, taking on former New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein as an adviser.

“Government and for-profit education businesses are becoming ever more inextricably inter-connected,” commented Michael McGill, superintendent for schools in Scarsdale, New York, upon learning of the state's plan to house his students info with the Murdoch/Gates start-ups. “This is a development that merits public concern and close public scrutiny.

### Closing Public Schools

#### Common Core test data used to justify closing public schools in poor areas

Whitehead 13 — John W. Whitehead, constitutional and human rights lawyer, founder of The Rutherford Institute, a nonprofit civil liberties and human rights organization, winner of the Hungarian Medal of Freedom, co-counsel in Paula Jones' sexual harassment lawsuit against President Clinton, co-counsel in several landmark Supreme Court cases and has law reviews published in Emory Law Journal, Pepperdine Law Review, Harvard Journal on Legislation, Washington and Lee Law Review, Cumberland Law Review, Tulsa Law Journal and the Temple University Civil Rights Law Review, 2013 (“Common Core: A Lesson Plan for Raising Up Compliant, Non-Thinking Citizens,” The Rutherford Institute, September 23rd, Available Online at https://www.rutherford.org/publications\_resources/john\_whiteheads\_commentary/common\_core\_a\_lesson\_plan\_for\_raising\_up\_compliant\_non\_thinking\_citizens, Accessed 06-22-2015)

As I point out in my new book, A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State, there are several methods for controlling a population. You can intimidate the citizenry into obedience through force, relying on military strength and weaponry such as SWAT team raids, militarized police, and a vast array of lethal and nonlethal weapons. You can manipulate them into marching in lockstep with your dictates through the use of propaganda and carefully timed fear tactics about threats to their safety, whether through the phantom menace of terrorist attacks or shooting sprees by solitary gunmen. Or you can indoctrinate them into compliance from an early age through the schools, discouraging them from thinking for themselves while rewarding them for regurgitating whatever the government, through its so-called educational standards, dictates they should be taught.

Those who founded America believed that an educated citizenry knowledgeable about their rights was the surest means of preserving freedom. If so, then the inverse should also hold true: that the surest way for a government to maintain its power and keep the citizenry in line is by rendering them ignorant of their rights and unable to think for themselves.

When viewed in light of the government’s ongoing attempts to amass power at great cost to Americans—in terms of free speech rights, privacy, due process, etc.—the debate over Common Core State Standards, which would transform and nationalize school curriculum from kindergarten through 12th grade, becomes that much more critical.

Essentially, these standards, which were developed through a partnership between big government and corporations, in the absence of any real input from parents or educators with practical, hands-on classroom experience, and are being rolled out in 45 states and the District of Columbia, will create a generation of test-takers capable of little else, molded and shaped by the federal government and its corporate allies into what it considers to be ideal citizens.

Moreover, as Valerie Strauss reports for the Washington Post: “The costs of the tests, which have multiple pieces throughout the year plus the computer platforms needed to administer and score them, will be enormous and will come at the expense of more important things. The plunging scores will be used as an excuse to close more public schools and open more privatized charters and voucher schools, especially in poor communities of color. If, as proposed, the Common Core’s ‘college and career ready’ performance level becomes the standard for high school graduation, it will push more kids out of high school than it will prepare for college.”

### Critical Thinking

#### The Common Core tests and curriculum reduce learning to instrumental rationality divorced from critical thinking and social responsibility.

Giroux 14 — Henry A. Giroux, Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department & Chair in Critical Pedagogy at The McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson University, member of Truthout's Board of Directors, author of dozens of books on learning and pedagogy including Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit and the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, 2014 (“Data Storms and the Tyranny of Manufactured Forgetting,” Truthout, June 24th, Available Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24550-data-storms-and-the-tyranny-of-manufactured-forgetting#/>, Accessed 06-25-2015)

It does not seem unreasonable to conclude at this point that critical thinking as a mode of reasoning is nearing extinction in both the wider society and the sphere of public schooling and higher education in the United States. Stanley Aronowitz has written that critical thought has lost its contemplative character and "has been debased to the level of technical intelligence, subordinate to meeting operational problems."[27] Nowhere is this more obvious than in the reactionary reforms being pushed on public schooling. President Obama's educational policies along with the Common Core curriculum created by Bill Gates-funded consultants are devoid of any critical content and reduce pedagogy to the dictates of instrumental standards alone. Education subjected to endless empirical assessment results only in a high-stakes testing mania - a boon, of course, for the test industries, but a devastating loss for teacher and student autonomy. In this instance, student achievement and learning are reduced to data that are completely divorced from "the inequalities of race, class and educational opportunity reflected in . . . test scores."[28]

Under the auspices of quality control, the cult of data and high-stakes testing becomes a signpost for empirical madness and number crunching run amok. "Teaching to the test" more often than not results in miseducating students while undermining any possibility of expanding their sense of wonder, imagination, critique and social responsibility. Left unchecked, instrumental rationality parading as educational reform will homogenize all knowledge and meaning, as it becomes a machine for proliferating forms of civic and social death, deadening the spirit with the weight of dead time and a graveyard of useless testing pedagogies. What does this have to do with the suppression of historical consciousness and the death of politics in the broader culture? The answer becomes clearer when we analyze the relationships among critical thinking, historical consciousness, and the notions of social and self-emancipation.

#### When literacy becomes about test scores and history becomes about memorization, we lose the ability to *challenge the state* and *address social problems*. No one is immune to the reign of neoliberal ideological tyranny that pushes the marginalized out of the social sphere. We celebrate our own authoritarian domination.

Giroux 14 — Henry A. Giroux, Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department & Chair in Critical Pedagogy at The McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson University, member of Truthout's Board of Directors, author of dozens of books on learning and pedagogy including Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit and the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, 2014 (“Data Storms and the Tyranny of Manufactured Forgetting,” Truthout, June 24th, Available Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24550-data-storms-and-the-tyranny-of-manufactured-forgetting#/>, Accessed 06-25-2015)

Clearly, the attack on reason, evidence, science and critical thought has reached perilous proportions in the United States. A number of political, economic, social and technological forces now work to distort reality and keep people passive, unthinking and unable to act in a critically engaged manner. Politicians, right-wing pundits and large swaths of the American public embrace positions that support Creationism, capital punishment, torture and the denial of human-engineered climate change, any one of which not only defies human reason but stands in stark opposition to evidence-based scientific arguments. Reason now collapses into opinion, as thinking itself appears to be both dangerous and antithetical to understanding ourselves, our relations to others and the larger state of world affairs. Under such circumstances, literacy disappears not just as the practice of learning skills, but also as the foundation for taking informed action. Divorced from any sense of critical understanding and agency, the meaning of literacy is narrowed to completing basic reading, writing and numeracy tasks assigned in schools. Literacy education is similarly reduced to strictly methodological considerations and standardized assessment, rooted in test taking and deadening forms of memorization, and becomes far removed from forms of literacy that would impart an ability to raise questions about historical and social contexts.

Literacy, in a critical sense, should always ask what it might mean to use knowledge and theory as a resource to address social problems and events in ways that are meaningful and expand democratic relations. I have commented on the decline of critical literacy elsewhere and it is worth repeating:

I don't mean illiterate in the sense of not being able to read, though we have far too many people who are functionally illiterate in a so-called advanced democracy, a point that writers such as Chris Hedges, Susan Jacoby, and the late Richard Hofstadter made clear in their informative books on the rise of anti-intellectualism in American life. I am talking about a different species of ignorance and anti-intellectualism. It is a form of illiteracy that points less to the lack of technical skills and the absence of certain competencies than to a deficit in the realms of politics - one that subverts both critical thinking and the notion of literacy as both critical interpretation and the possibility of intervention in the world. This type of illiteracy is not only incapable of dealing with complex and contested questions; it is also an excuse for glorifying the principle of self-interest as a paradigm for understanding politics. This is a form of illiteracy marked by the inability to see outside of the realm of the privatized self, an illiteracy in which the act of translation withers, reduced to a relic of another age. The United States is a country that is increasingly defined by [an educational] deficit, a chronic and deadly form of civic illiteracy that points to the failure of both its education­al system and the growing ability of anti-democratic forces to use the educational force of the culture to promote the new illiteracy. As this widespread illiteracy has come to dominate American culture, we have moved from a culture of questioning to a culture of shouting and in doing so have restaged politics and power in both unproductive and anti-democratic ways.[11]

Needless to say, as John Pilger has pointed out, what is at work in the death of literacy and the promotion of ignorance as a civic virtue is a "confidence trick" in which "the powerful would like us to believe that we live in an eternal present in which reflection is limited to Facebook, and historical narrative is the preserve of Hollywood."[12] Among the “materialized shocks” of the ever-present spectacles of violence, the expanding states of precarity and the production of the atomized, repressed and disconnected individual, narcissism reigns supreme. "Personal communication tends to all meaning," even as moral decency and the "agency of conscience" wither.[13]

How else to explain the endless celebration of an unchecked self-interest, a culture that accepts cruelty toward others as a necessary survival strategy, a growing “economics of contempt” that maligns and blames the poor for their condition rather than acknowledging injustices in the social order, or the paucity of even the most rudimentary knowledge among the American public about history, politics, civil rights, the Constitution, public affairs, politics and other cultures, countries and political systems?[14] Political ignorance now exists in the United States on a scale that seems inconceivable: for example, "only 40 percent of adults know that there are 100 Senators in the U.S. Congress," and a significant number of Americans believe that the Constitution designated English as the country’s official language and Christianity as its official religion.[15]

What is particularly disturbing is the way in which there has been a resurgence of a poisonous form of technical rationality in American culture, or what I call the return of data storms that uncritically amass metrics, statistics and empirical evidence at the expense of knowledge that signals the need for contextualization and interpretation in support of public values, the common good and the ethical imagination. Data storms make an appeal to a decontextualized and allegedly pure description of facts, and what Herbert Marcuse called a "misplaced concreteness," one that was particularly "prevalent in the social sciences, a pseudo-empiricism which . . . tended to make the objectivity of the social sciences a vehicle of apologetics and defense of the status quo."[16]

This obsession with metrics feeds an insatiable desire for control and lives in an eternal present, removed from matters of justice and historical memory. The novelist, Anne Lamott, is right in arguing that the "headlong rush into data is overshadowing 'everything great and exciting that someone like me would dare to call grace. What this stuff steals is our aliveness . . . Grids, spreadsheets and algorithms take away the sensory connection to our lives, where our feet are, what we're seeing, all the raw materials of life, which by their very nature are disorganized.' Metrics, she said, rob individuals of the sense that they can choose their own path, 'because if you’re going by the data and the formula, there’s only one way.'"[17]

Not only is this mode of rationality antithetical to other modes of reasoning that recognize and value what cannot be measured as being essential to life as well as democratic values and social relations, but it also carries the weight of a deadly form of masculine logic wedded to toxic notions of control, violence and ideological purity.[18] It is a form of rationality that serves the interests of the rich and obscures modes of thinking that are more capacious and reflective in their capacity to address broader conceptions of identity, citizenship and non-market values such as love, trust and fidelity.

The cult of the measurable is enthralled by instant evaluation, and fervently believes that data hold the key to our collective fate.

It bears repeating: reality is now shaped by the culture’s infatuation with a narrow, depoliticizing rationality, or what Frankfurt School theorist Max Horkheimer called instrumental reason. Bruce Feiler, writing in The New York Times, argues that not only are we awash in data, but words and "unquantifiable arenas like history, literature, religion, and the arts are receding from public life, replaced by technology, statistics, science, and math. Even the most elemental form of communication, the story, is being pushed aside by the list."[19] Historical memory and public space are indeed the first casualties in this reign of ideological tyranny, which models agency only on consumerism and value only on exchange value. The cult of the measurable is enthralled by instant evaluation, and fervently believes that data hold the key to our collective fate. John Steppling sums up the authoritarian nature of this ideological colonization and monopoly of the present. He writes:

Today, the erasure of space is linked to the constant hum of data information, of social networking, and of the compulsive repetition of the same. There is no space for accumulation in narrative. Emotional or intellectual accumulation is destroyed by the hyper-branded reality of the Spectacle. So, the poor are stigmatized for sleep. It is a sign of laziness and sloth. Of lassitude and torpor. The ideal citizen is one at work all the time. Industrious and attentive to the screen image or the sound of command. Diligence has come to mean a readiness to obey. A culture of shaming and reprimand is based on a model of reality in which there is no history to reflect upon. Today’s mass culture only reinforces this. The "real" is a never changing present. Plots revolve around the idea of disrupting this present, and then returning to this present. Actual tragedy, Chernobyl or Bhopal or Katrina, are simply ignored in terms of their material consequences. What matters are events that disrupt the Empire's carefully constructed present reality.[20]

It gets worse. Within this reality, endlessly hawked by a neoliberal brand of authoritarianism, people are turned into nothing more than "statistical units." Individuals and marginalized groups are all but stripped of their humanity, thereby clearing the way for the growth of a formative culture that allows individuals to ignore the suffering of others and to "escape from unbearable human dilemmas . . . . Statistics become more important than real human life."[21]

Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyons have connected the philosophical implications of experiencing a reality defined by constant measurement to how most people now allow their private expressions and activities to be monitored by the authoritarian security-surveillance state.[22] No one is left unscathed. In the current historical conjuncture, neoliberalism’s theater of cruelty joins forces with new technologies that can easily "colonize the private" even as it holds sacrosanct the notion that any "refusal to participate in the technological innovations and social networks (so indispensable for the exercise of social and political control) . . . becomes sufficient grounds to remove all those who lag behind in the globalization process (or have disavowed its sanctified idea) to the margins of society."[23] Inured to data gathering and number crunching, the country’s slide into authoritarianism has become not only permissible, but participatory - bolstered by a general ignorance of how a market-driven culture induces all of us to sacrifice our secrets, private lives and very identities to social media, corporations and the surveillance state.[24]

#### This aggression toward critical thinking in schools enables the deadly combination of anti-intellectualism and historical amnesia that produced terrorism, the war in Iraq, and the modern authoritarian state.

Giroux 14 — Henry A. Giroux, Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department & Chair in Critical Pedagogy at The McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson University, member of Truthout's Board of Directors, author of dozens of books on learning and pedagogy including Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit and the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, 2014 (“Data Storms and the Tyranny of Manufactured Forgetting,” Truthout, June 24th, Available Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24550-data-storms-and-the-tyranny-of-manufactured-forgetting#/>, Accessed 06-25-2015)

The current mainstream debate regarding the crisis in Iraq and Syria offers a near perfect example of both the death of historical memory and the collapse of critical thinking in the United States. It also signifies the emergence of a profoundly anti-democratic culture of manufactured ignorance and social indifference. Surely, historical memory is under assault when the dominant media give airtime to the incessant war mongering of politicians such as Senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham and retro pundits such as Bill Kristol, Douglas Feith, Condoleezza Rice and Paul Wolfowitz - not one of whom has any credibility given how they have worked to legitimate the unremitting web of lies and deceit that provided cover for the disastrous US invasion of Iraq under the Bush/Cheney administration.

History repeats itself in the recent resurgence of calls for US military interventions in Syria and Iraq. Such repetitions of history undoubtedly shift from tragedy to farce as former Vice President Dick Cheney once again becomes a leading pundit calling for military solutions to the current crises in the Middle East, in spite of his established reputation for hypocrisy, lies, corporate cronyism, defending torture and abysmal policymaking under the Bush administration. The resurrection of Dick Cheney, the Darth Vader of the 21st century, as a legitimate source on the current crisis in Syria and Iraq is a truly monumental display of historical amnesia and moral dissipation. As Thom Hartman observes, Cheney bears a large responsibility for the Iraq War, which "was the single biggest foreign policy disaster in recent - or maybe even all - of American history. It cost the country around $4 trillion, killed hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, left 4,500 Americans dead, and turned what was once one of the more developed countries in the Arab World into a slaughterhouse.[3] What room is there for historical memory in an age "when the twin presiding deities are irony and violence"?[4]

A resurrection of historical memory in this moment could provide important lessons regarding the present crisis.

Missing from the commentaries by the mainstream media regarding the current situation in Iraq is any historical context that would offer a critical account of the disorder plaguing the Middle East. A resurrection of historical memory in this moment could provide important lessons regarding the present crisis. What is clear in this case is that a widespread avoidance of the past has become not only a sign of the appalling lack of historical knowledge in contemporary American culture, but a deliberate political weapon used by the powerful to keep people passive and blind to the truth. Of course, there are many factors currently contributing to this production of ignorance and the lobotomizing of individual and collective agency.

Such factors extend from the idiocy of celebrity and popular culture and the dumbing down of American schools to the transformation of the mainstream media into a deadly mix of propaganda, violence and entertainment. The latter is particularly crucial as the collapse of journalistic standards that could inform the onslaught of information finds its counterpart in an unrelenting rise of political and civic illiteracy. The knowledge and value deficits that produce such detrimental forms of ignorance not only crush the imagination, critical modes of social interaction, and political dissent, but also destroy those public spheres and spaces that promote thoughtfulness, thinking, critical dialogue and serve as "guardians of truths as facts," as Hannah Arendt once put it.[5]

The blight of rampant consumerism, unregulated finance capital and weakened communal bonds is directly related to the culture’s production of atomized, isolated and utterly privatized individuals who have lost sight of the fact that "humanity is never acquired in solitude."[6] This retreat into private silos has resulted in the inability of individuals to connect their personal suffering with larger public issues. Thus detached from any concept of the common good or viable vestige of the public realm, they are left to face alone a world of increasing precarity and uncertainty in which it becomes difficult to imagine anything other than how to survive. Under such circumstances, there is little room for thinking critically and acting collectively in ways that are imaginative and courageous.

Surely, the celebration and widespread prevalence of ignorance in American culture does more than merely testify "to human backwardness or stupidity"; it also "indicates human weakness and the fear that it is unbearably difficult to live beset by continuous doubts."[7] Yet, what is often missed in analysis of political and civic illiteracy as the new normal is the degree to which these new forms of illiteracy not only result in an unconscious flight from politics, but also produce a moral coma that supports modern systems of terror and authoritarianism. Civic illiteracy is about more than the glorification and manufacture of ignorance on an individual scale: it is producing a nationwide crisis of agency, memory and thinking itself.

#### Tests don’t measure leadership, courage, or creativity

Rugh 13 — Peter Rugh, Brooklyn-based reporter who contributes to Vice.com and is a correspondent for WagingNonviolence.org, 2013 (“Exposed: How Murdoch, Bill Gates and Big Corporations are Data Mining our Schools,” Truthout, May 2nd, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/16130-exposed-how-murdoch-bill-gates-and-big-corporations-are-data-mining-our-schools, Accessed 06-22-2015)

What some critics find most troubling is not simply that corporate interests are collecting student personal information, but how that information is being used. As the anonymous programmer put it, “I don't think a lot these products are going to work. Teachers aren't going to like them, but that doesn't matter. These are essentially accountability systems.”

Some school districts have released statistical teacher evaluations as a way of holding teachers' feet to the fire and to justify layoffs. In Los Angeles, one teacher committed suicide after the city paper published his score. In New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and elsewhere, data standardized tests results have been used to shutter schools and replace them with charters, often sponsored by hedge funds.

There are other ways, of course, to improve schools, says the programmer. Rather than shutting them down, giving teachers the slip and hiring corporate data tracking firms, policy makers could invest in improving the quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding schools. Also, “they could just hire more teachers.” He insisted on anonymity for fear of retaliation from his employer, because such comments could cripple the programmer's entire profession, if heeded.

Increasingly, parents are refusing to feed the statistical machine. Over the last two weeks, several hundred in New York opted their children out of Common Core tests. In Chicago last week, parents also refused to allow their children to be tested. These boycotts were inspired by a school-wide refusal by teachers at Garfield High School in Seattle, Washington, to administer standardized exams to students.

“Arne Duncan has called education in America today 'the civil rights issue of our time',” said Jesse Hagopian, a Garfield teacher who helped initiate the school-wide test refusal last fall. “And I agree with him. Only I think his methodology is flawed. Because I know what the actual Civil Rights Movement was built on.”

Just as a bus boycott helped launch the Civil Right's Movement, Hagopian hopes that a test boycott will help launch a grassroots education reform movement.

“Parents, students and teachers need to band together,” he says, “and boycott tests that are designed to rank and sort our children and label them failures rather than provide them educational equity. These tests can't measure leadership, civic courage, creativity, the things we're going to need to solve the problems in the world today like endless war, mass incarceration and climate change.”

#### Absent critical education, politics is useless. Education is starting point for fighting social injustice and reshaping existing institutional relationships. The culture of non-thinking guarantees tyranny.

Giroux 14 — Henry A. Giroux, Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department & Chair in Critical Pedagogy at The McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson University, member of Truthout's Board of Directors, author of dozens of books on learning and pedagogy including Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit and the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, 2014 (“Data Storms and the Tyranny of Manufactured Forgetting,” Truthout, June 24th, Available Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24550-data-storms-and-the-tyranny-of-manufactured-forgetting#/>, Accessed 06-25-2015)

Under the auspices of quality control, the cult of data and high-stakes testing becomes a signpost for empirical madness and number crunching run amok. "Teaching to the test" more often than not results in miseducating students while undermining any possibility of expanding their sense of wonder, imagination, critique and social responsibility. Left unchecked, instrumental rationality parading as educational reform will homogenize all knowledge and meaning, as it becomes a machine for proliferating forms of civic and social death, deadening the spirit with the weight of dead time and a graveyard of useless testing pedagogies. What does this have to do with the suppression of historical consciousness and the death of politics in the broader culture? The answer becomes clearer when we analyze the relationships among critical thinking, historical consciousness, and the notions of social and self-emancipation.

If we think of emancipation as both a mode of critical understanding and a form of action designed to overthrow structures of domination, we can begin to illuminate the interplay between historical consciousness, critical thinking and emancipatory behavior. At the level of understanding, critical thinking represents the ability to step beyond commonsense assumptions and to be able to evaluate them in terms of their genesis, development and purpose. Such thinking should not be viewed simply as a form of progressive reasoning; it must be considered in itself as a fundamental political act. In this perspective, critical thinking becomes a mode of reasoning that, as Merleau-Ponty points out, is embedded in the realization that "I am able," meaning that one can use individual capacities and collective possibilities "to go beyond the created structures in order to create others."[29] Critical thinking as a political act means that human beings must emerge from their own “submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled.”[30] Not only does this instil a sense that they must work with others to actively shape history, but it also means that they must "escape" from their own history - that is, the history which society has designated for them.

As historical memory is erased, critical thought is crushed by a sterile instrumental rationality under the guise of mass information and a data storm.

As Jean Paul Sartre writes, "you become what you are in the context of what others have made of you."[31] This is a crucial point, and one that links critical agency and historical consciousness. For we must turn to history in order to understand the traditions that have shaped our individual biographies and relationships with other human beings. This critical attentiveness to one's own history and culture represents an important element in examining the socially constructed sources underlying one's formative processes. To become aware of the processes of historical self-formation initiates an important beginning in breaking apart the taken-for-granted assumptions that legitimize social injustice and existing institutional arrangements. Therefore, critical thinking demands a form of hermeneutic understanding that is historically grounded. Similarly, it must be stressed that the capacity for a historically grounded critique is inseparable from those conditions that foster collective communication and critical dialogue. In this case, such conditions take as a starting point the need to delegitimize the culture of neoliberalism and the socio-economic structure it supports, particularly what might be called a pernicious notion of instrumental rationality, with its one-sided emphasis on mathematical utility, numbers, data and the cult of the empirical.

Schools play a crucial, but far from straightforward, role in reproducing the culture of ignorance and instrumental rationality, though they are not alone as the popular media in its traditional and newer digital formats have become a powerful educational force throughout the culture. Furthermore, the mechanisms of social control - such as high-stakes testing - that increasingly characterize school life are not new developments, despite what their proponents would claim for them. They are rooted in the modern conditions that have functioned to transform human needs as well as buttress dominant social and political institutions. Put another way, the prevailing mode of technocratic and instrumental rationality that permeates both the schools and the larger society has not just been tacked on to the existing social order as a recent innovation. It has developed historically over the last century and with particular intensity since the end of the 1970s; consequently, it deeply saturates our collective experiences, practices and routines. Thus, to overcome the culture of instrumental rationality means that educators, artists, intellectuals and others will have to construct alternative social formations and worldviews that transform both the consciousness as well as the deep vital structures of schools and the larger American public. Put bluntly, education and the changing of habits, consciousness, desires and knowledge must be viewed as both an educational task and central to any viable notion of politics.

As a pedagogical challenge, progressives of various ideological stripes might engage in the political task of making power visible by raising fundamental questions such as: What counts as knowledge? How is this knowledge produced and legitimized? Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who has access to this knowledge? How is this knowledge distributed and reproduced in the classroom and wider society? What kinds of social relationships are being produced at the level of everyday life in schools, the workplace and other sites and may parallel or disrupt the social relations in the wider society? How do the prevailing forms of public pedagogy and empirical methodological frenzy serve to legitimize existing knowledge and practices?

Questions such as these, which focus on the production, distribution and legitimation of knowledge, values, desires and subjectivities, should be related to the institutional arrangements of the larger society. Moreover, these questions should be analyzed as part of a larger understanding of why so many people participate in their own oppression, why they accept the values of an authoritarian society, and why they are willing to embrace as common sense the cutthroat values, practices and policies of neoliberalism, regardless of the misery caused by its malignant blend of social austerity and unchecked casino capitalism. In other words, these are questions that should provide the foundation for engaging the educative nature of politics as it disseminates its messages through all those cultural apparatuses that are actively engaged in producing subjectivities amenable to the dictates of an authoritarian society. It is important to recognize that these questions can help teachers, students, young people, workers, artists, intellectuals and others to identify, understand and generate those pivotal social processes needed to encourage the American public to become active participants in the search for knowledge and meaning - a search designed to foster, rather than suppress, critical thinking and social action.

Central to such a culture of questioning is the necessity to address the fact that the cult of instrumental rationality in the United States has no language for relating the self to public life, social responsibility or the demands of citizenship. It has nothing to say about what institutions should achieve to support democracy, and why they too often fail. Instrumental reason erases the crucial question of how knowledge is related to self-definition and weakens the ability of individuals to raise questions about how knowledge works to secure particular forms of power and desire.

While it is true that critical thinking will not in and of itself change the nature of existing society, engaging in an intellectual struggle with the death-driven rationality that now fuels neoliberal capitalism will set the foundation for producing generations of young people who might launch a larger social movement. Such a movement will enable new forms of struggle, and hopefully a new future in which questions of justice, dignity, equality and compassion matter. The relationship between the wider culture of instrumental rationality, commodification and privatization, and the wider practices of public pedagogy is, in essence, a relationship between ideology and social control. The dynamic at work in this relationship is complex and diverse. To begin to understand that dynamic as a pedagogical and political issue is to understand that history is not predetermined, but waiting to be seized.

The culture of instrumental rationality has undermined the critical nature of the civic and the political, reduced education to a narrow focus on mathematical utility, weakened the democratic purpose of schooling and other institutions, and undermined the role of educators, artists and other cultural workers who are engaged and critical public intellectuals. Given the importance of education in and out of schools in providing the formative culture necessary for students and others to develop the capacities for connecting reason and freedom, ethics and knowledge, and learning and social change, progressives must reclaim education as an emancipatory project deeply rooted in the goal of expanding the possibilities of critical thought, agency and democracy itself.

Such a task is about reclaiming the Enlightenment emphasis on freedom, reason and informed hope as well as engaging education as a crucial site of struggle, one that cannot be frozen in the empty, depoliticizing ignorance that supports an oppressive culture of instrumental rationality. Near the end of her life Hannah Arendt argued that thinking is the essence of politics because she recognized that no politics could be visionary if it did not provide the foundation for human beings to become literate, critical agents. Thinking is a dangerous activity, especially in dark times like the historical moment we currently inhabit. But, for Arendt, what she called "nonthinking" is the real peril in that it allows tyranny to take root, and history to repeat itself again and again. She wrote:

And to think always means to think critically. And to think critically is always to be hostile. Every thought actually undermines whatever there is of rigid rules, general convictions, et cetera. Everything which happens in thinking is subject to a critical examination of whatever there is. That is, there are no dangerous thoughts for the simple reason that thinking itself is such a dangerous enterprise. . . . nonthinking is even more dangerous. I don't deny that thinking is dangerous, but I would say not thinking, ne pas reflechir c'est plus dangereux encore [not thinking is even more dangerous].[32]

No democratic society can survive with a configuration of power, institutions and politics dedicated to keeping people ignorant while exploiting their needs, labor, desires and hopes for a better future. Dependency and vulnerability are now viewed as a weakness, even as the public services and public servants that might alleviate people's distress are defined as gratuitous costs by the neoliberal state. American democracy is losing ground against an onslaught of neoliberal forces in every realm, not only in the realm of politics. As historical memory is erased, critical thought is crushed by a sterile instrumental rationality under the guise of mass information and a data storm. The formative cultures and institutions that enable individuals to learn how to become critically engaged citizens are being eviscerated. If unchecked, neoliberal barbarism will strengthen its dominance over everyday life, and the transition into authoritarianism will quicken. The way out of this conundrum is not to be found in the use of data-gathering technologies or in an uncritical faith in the expansion of new digital and social media. Neither will it be discovered in a callous retreat from compassion and social responsibility, or in reliance on a depoliticizing instrumental rationality.

It is only a rebirth of historical memory that will enable the merging of dangerous thinking, critical knowledge and subversive action into a movement capable of reviving the dream of a future in which the practice of radical democratization prevails. Memory work is dangerous, particularly to those defenders of tyranny such as Cheney, Kristol, Rice and other warmongers for whom the politics of forgetting is crucial to their own legitimation. When such anti-public intellectuals have returned to the national spotlight in order to revel in history's erasure, it is time to make trouble and to hope, as Herbert Marcuse once stated, that “the horizon of history is still open.”[33]

#### Hostility to critical thinking also provides a platform for anti-democratic views like the hatred of women. People make arguments without any sense of social or moral responsibility.

Giroux 14 — Henry A. Giroux, Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department & Chair in Critical Pedagogy at The McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson University, member of Truthout's Board of Directors, author of dozens of books on learning and pedagogy including Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit and the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, 2014 (“Data Storms and the Tyranny of Manufactured Forgetting,” Truthout, June 24th, Available Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24550-data-storms-and-the-tyranny-of-manufactured-forgetting#/>, Accessed 06-25-2015)

How else to explain, for instance, a major national newspaper’s willingness to provide a platform for views that express an unchecked hatred of women - as when The Washington Post published George Will’s column in which he states that being a rape victim is now "a coveted status that confers privileges"?[8] Will goes on to say that accusations of rape and sexual violence are not only overblown, but that many women who claim they were raped are "delusional."[9] There is a particular type of aggressive ignorance here that constitutes a symbolic assault on women, while obscuring the underlying conditions that legitimate sexual violence in the United States. Will expresses more concern over what he calls the "pesky arithmetic"[10] used to determine the percentage of women actually raped on campuses than the ever-increasing incidence of sexual assault on women in colleges, the military, and a wide variety of other private and public spheres.

The clueless George Will, evidently angry about the growing number of women who are reporting the violence waged against them, draws on the persuasive utility of mathematical data as a way to bolster a shockingly misogynist argument and flee from any sense of social and moral responsibility. While such expressions of resentment make Will appear as an antediluvian, privileged white man who is truly delusional, he is typical of an expanding mass of pundits who live in a historical void and for whom emotion overtakes reason. Increasingly, it appears the American media no longer requires that words bear any relationship to truth or to a larger purpose other than peddling rigid and archaic ideologies designed to shock and stupefy audiences.

### A2: Common Core Testing Supports Standards That Improve Education

#### Common core, like every attempt for standardized standards, is doomed — a one-size-fits-all approach can’t solve

Kibbe 14 — Matt Kibbe, President of FreedomWorks, former Chief of Staff to Rep. Dan Miller, Director of Federal Budget Policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Senior economist at the Republican National Committee, 2014 ("Common Core’s Top-Down Standards are Doomed to Failure," *US News & World Report*, February 27th, Available Online at http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/are-the-common-core-standards-a-good-idea/attempts-to-standardize-education-are-doomed-to-fail, Accessed 7-6-2015)

For the uninitiated, Common Core represents a set of national standards with the aim of imposing uniformity on the country’s schools through rigorous testing requirements. Aside from the circulation of number of laughably terrible math questions approved under the new standards, the response from those affected has not been enthusiastic, with a wide variety of state level initiatives being proposed to block the implementation of Common Core. Even the National Education Association, the largest teachers’ union in the country, is walking back its initial support for the standards in light of what it calls a “completely botched” roll-out.

This should come as no surprise. Attempts to standardize something like education are, by their very nature, doomed to fail because every child’s mind is unique. Different students learn in different ways, at different paces, and forcing adherence to inflexible, one-size-fits-all standards can only result in harm in the long term.

Since school funding is tied to success in testing, good teachers are handicapped from using their skills to their best advantage. Instead of bringing their years of experience to engage students on a personal level, pressure to produce measurable “results” will turn teachers into little more than automatons, frantically teaching to the test under the threat of losing their own jobs if the required scores don’t materialize. We saw this same pattern under No Child Left Behind, which placed increased emphasis on standardized testing. The freedom and creativity necessary to inspire students and get them thinking for themselves, as unique individuals, is lost in the ruthless quest for conformity.

[Check out our editorial cartoons on President Obama.]

In a recent and half-hearted attempt to spin Common Core into something conservatives could support, Republican strategist Rich Galen insisted, “Standards and accountability are conservative values that we have promoted for decades!" While there is undoubtedly some truth in this, the assumption behind the statement is completely backwards. There is nothing conservative about standards imposed from on high by a government that has proven itself to be — time and time again — hopelessly corrupt, relentlessly partisan, and painfully incompetent. Instead, accountability should be local in nature. No one is better equipped to understand the needs of individual children than their parents, working with teachers within their shared communities.

#### National standards fail — policymakers don’t understand the classroom and teachers inevitably reject standards anyways

Mehta 13 — Jal Mehta, Associate Professor in education at Harvard, PhD in Sociology and Public Policy from Harvard, 2013 (“Why American Education Fails” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June Issue, Available online at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2013-04-03/why-american-education-fails>, Accessed 7-7-15)

The result has been a vicious cycle in the interaction between policymakers and practitioners, one that leaves little hope for the much-needed improvements in American education. Policymakers understandably want to intervene in the failing system, given the highly uneven performance among schools, with dropout rates as high as 40-50 percent in some urban districts. They have done so through a variety of mechanisms, but most notably through an effort to set higher standards for student performance and to create consequences for schools that fail to improve. Teachers, for their part, resent the external mandates developed by people who know little of their daily work and who are unwilling to provide the social support that their students need. Teachers' unions worry that their members are being scapegoated for their schools' failure, and so they frequently harden their positions and seek to resist what they see as unfair and unwise external accountability measures. Many policymakers, in turn, see schools as units that need tighter coupling to overcome the teachers' opposition and think of unions as an obstruction to necessary reforms. The cycle continues, with each group playing its appointed role, but with no improvement in sight.

#### Common core testing won’t improve education, it sucks money out of an educational system needed to deal with poverty

Stephen Krashen, January 25, 2014, Schools Matter, The Common Core: A Disaster for Libraries, A Disaster for Language Arts, A Disaster for American Education, Knowledge Quest 42 (3), <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/the-common-core-disaster-for-libraries.html> DOA: 10-26-15

There never has been a need for the common core and there is no evidence that it will do students any good. The common core ignores the real problem in American education: Poverty. The common core will continue the process of turning schools into test-prep centers, and bleed billions from places the money is badly needed, where it can help protect children from the effects of poverty. The only real goal of the common core is to do the opposite, to profit a small group of the elite, the .01% at taxpayer expense, a classic case of "take from the needy, give to the greedy."

### A2: Common Core Improves Teacher Quality

#### Common Core discourages qualified teachers from teaching – teachers reject the standards and resources for Common Core implementation could instead be used for more attractive reforms.

Ravitch 13 – Diane Ravitch, a historian of education, educational policy analyst, and research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Previously, she was a U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education. Ravitch is a 3-time winner of the Delta Kappa Gamma Educators’ Award. She has a PhD from Columbia University in education history, 2013 (“Why Teachers Don’t Like the Common Core”, http://dianeravitch.net, December 21, Available Online at http://dianeravitch.net/2013/12/21/why-teachers-dont-like-the-common-core/, accessed 7/10/15, KM)

Although Arne Duncan, Jeb Bush, the New York Times, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Exxon Mobil have done their best to create an air of inevitability about the Common Core (the train has left the station), parents and teachers continue to object to the imposition of these untested standards written mostly by non-educators. In this article, which appeared in the Journal News in the Lower Hudson Valley of New York, Melissa Heckler and Nettie Webb–veteran educators– explain their objections to the Common Core. They insist that what matters most in education is the interaction between teachers and students, not a scripted curriculum or higher standards. They write: Through the knowledge of subject content, teaching strategies, and brain research, teachers strive to reach and teach every child. The scripted modules undermine the essential teaching relationship by preventing the individualized exchange between teacher and student, the hallmark of active learning. Student interest should be a salient feature that helps develop and drive curriculum — something not possible with prescribed modules. Good teachers embrace change but not change for the sake of change: Veteran teachers recognize what we did yesterday is not necessarily good for today. Teachers embrace processes that produce meaningful, constructive change that moves education forward in our country. However, teachers recognize that Common Core is not research-based and there hasn’t been the opportunity to define and refine the standards in this chaotic collapsed time frame for implementation. Common Core is causing students to suffer. This is why teachers reject this change so vehemently. Stress has caused these reactions: students reporting they hate school, regressive behaviors like toileting mishaps, crying, increased aggression, sleeplessness and stomach upsets before and during the tests. This is what has occurred under Common Core. This is meaningless, destructive change. Why do teachers resist the mandates of Common Core? We suggest money spent on the development of these major unresearched and unfunded mandates to implement CCSS be used to alleviate the lack of resources — unequal staffing, support services, and restoration of school libraries, music and art classes, as well as enrichment programs in these schools. Research has shown that this is the way to help even the playing field for the districts in poverty. Teachers are mind-molders. When they embrace, create and implement meaningful change with their students, they are helping every child reach his or her potential. Teachers embrace constructive, researched change that result in better, meaningful learning. Resistance to the Common Core standards should be understood in this context.

#### Teachers are incentivized to quit because of Common Core – the standards prevent educators with creative, successful teaching methods from actually teaching.

Chiaramonte 13 – Perry Chiaramonte, a reporter with FoxNews.com where he covers a wide range of issues including international affairs, politics, urban policy/planning, education, and technology, 2013 (“Teachers complain Common Core-linked lessons little more than scripts to read/”, Fox News, December 8, Available Online at http://dianeravitch.net/2013/12/21/why-teachers-dont-like-the-common-core/, accessed 7/10/15, KM)

Some of the biggest critics of new lesson plans aligned with the national Common Core standards are the people charged with teaching them. A growing number of teachers say the national standards, adopted by some 45 states, have combined with pressure to "teach to the test" to take all individuality out of their craft. Some teachers told FoxNews.com the new education approach is turning their lessons into little more than data-dispensing sessions, and they fear their jobs are being marginalized. “Now teachers aren’t as unique,” said Michael Warren, a public school history teacher in New Jersey. “It means anyone can do it. It’s like taking something done by humans and having it done by a machine.” Backers of the Common Core Standards Initiative, which was created at the behest of the nation's governors and has since been enthusiastically backed by the Obama administration, say it is critical to ensuring all of the nation's middle and high school students meet a baseline in math and English. But while Common Core is not itself a curriculum, but a set of standardized tests, private curriculum producers are marketing their materials as "Common Core-aligned." Critics of Common Core say establishment of a national standard is simply a backdoor way of nationalizing curriculum. “The root of the problem with the Common Core initiative is that standards drive testing, which drives curriculum,” Glyn Wright, executive director of The Eagle Forum, a Washington-based watchdog group that has long campaigned against the new curriculum, told FoxNews.com. “The standards were created by private organizations in Washington, D.C., without input from teachers or parents and absent any kind of study or pilot test to prove its effectiveness.” “In fact, the only mathematician and the only ELA expert on the validation committee refused to sign off on the standards because they are inadequate,” she added, “Yet, the standards have been copyrighted and cannot be changed, and this is resulting in a loss of local and state control.” Parent groups have criticized Common Core, and there are efforts under way in several states to repeal participation. But the complaints from teachers are relatively new, and come as the Common Core-aligned teaching materials are being implemented for the first time in many districts. In a recent Washington Post blog post, a Delaware public school educator penned an anonymous letter complaining that Common Core was taking the joy out of a profession she loved. “Teaching used to be a fun job that I was deeply passionate about," the teacher wrote. "I used my own creativity, mixed with a healthy dose of perseverance, dedication and cheerleading to encourage my students, most labeled ‘special needs,’ to believe in their own abilities and self-worth.” The teacher goes on to explain that despite strong performance reviews in the past, the Common Core standards have been counter-intuitive to her methods as her employers told her that her performance would be judged to how closely she adheres to the new standard. "I was given a curriculum and told by my administration to teach it ‘word-for-word,’" the teacher wrote. "In a meeting with my administration, I was reprimanded with “Don’t forget, standards drive our instruction.” Another New Jersey public school teacher who asked not to be named, said the rigid new instructions for teaching have left her and her colleagues feeling like "robots." "I'm unable to do projects anymore because we have so much other stuff to do that is based on the Common Core," she told FoxNews.com. "All the teachers at my school, all we talk about is how we don't teach anymore and we feel like robots just doing what we are told to teach and can't have any creativity for the students to enjoy themselves."

### A2: Common Core Doesn't Mandate a Curriculum

#### Common Core has a large effect on school curriculum even if it doesn’t mandate one

Bedrick 14 — Jason Bedrick, Policy analyst at the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom, former education policy research fellow at the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, M.A. in Public Policy from Harvard University, 2014 ("Common Core and the Impact of National Standards," *Cato Institute*, August 20th, Available Online at http://www.cato.org/publications/testimony/common-core-national-standards, Accessed 7-6-2015)

Additionally, the conformity induced by Common Core undermines the very diversity and innovation that give parental choice its value. While Common Core does not directly mandate a specific curriculum, its testing regime will drive what is taught in the classroom, when it is taught, and even how it is taught. For example, Common Core tests algebra in 9th grade, which has already induced states like California to abandon their previous practice of teaching algebra in 8th grade. Had they not conformed, their students would likely have scored lower when being tested on material that they had not covered in a year.

The Common Core tests would also drive how concepts are taught in the classroom. As Dr. James Shuls of the Show-Me Institute, a former school teacher, has written:

The fact is that curriculum standards don’t tell teachers how to teach in the same way that a high jump bar doesn’t tell a jumper how to jump. You could theoretically jump over a high jump bar in whatever way you would like; but because of how the jump is structured there is a clear advantage to doing the old Fosbury Flop.2

### A2: Common Core Strengthens US Competitiveness

#### Common Core hurts economic competition — lower labor costs internationally displace jobs, rigid standards can’t account for future industries, standards ignore the importance of creativity to the economy, and lack of global education outweigh any marginal benefits.

Zhao 13 – Yong Zhao, presidential chair and associate dean for global education at the University of Oregon’s College of Education, where he also serves as the director of the Center for Advanced Technology in Education. He is a fellow of the International Academy for Education. Zhao was the former director of both the Center for Teaching and Technology and the U.S.-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence at Michigan State University, as well as the executive director of the Confucius Institute/Institute for Chinese Teacher Education, 2013 (“Five key questions about the Common Core standards”, The Washington Post, January 8, Available Online at http://zhaolearning.com/2013/01/02/five-questions-to-ask-about-the-common-core/, accessed 7/2/15, KM)

What makes one globally competitive?

With only a few exceptions (e.g., North Korea), geographical distance and political boundaries no longer divide the world in terms of economic activities. Virtually all economies are globally interconnected and interdependent. Employment opportunities are thus no longer isolated to specific locations. Jobs can be outsourced to distant places physically or performed by individuals remotely. In a world where jobs can be and have been moved around globally, anyone could potentially go after any job he or she desires. Whether she can be employed depends largely on two factors: qualifications and price. All things being equal, those who ask for a lower price for the same qualifications will get the job.

With over seven billion people living on Earth today, there is plenty of competition. But due to the vast economic disparities in the world, there exists tremendous differences in labor cost. The hourly compensation costs in manufacturing in 2010 varied from $1.90 in the Philippines to $57.53 in Norway, according to data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). If a Norwegian were doing exactly the same job as a Filipino, it is very probable that his job would be gone soon. For the Norwegian to keep his job, he’d better be doing something that the Filipino is unable to do.

If all children are asked to master the same knowledge and skills, those whose time costs less will be much more competitive than those with higher costs. There are many poor and hungry people in the developing world willing to work for a fraction of what workers in developed countries need. Thus for those in developed countries such as the United States to be globally competitive, they must offer something qualitatively different, that is, something that cannot be obtained at a lower cost in developing countries. And that something is certainly not great test scores in a few subjects or the so-called basic skills, because those can be achieved in the developing countries. Yet the Common Core claims to be benchmarked with internationally high-performing countries, i.e., countries with high scores.

Can you be ready for careers that do not exist yet?

Old jobs are being replaced by new ones rapidly as old industries disappear due to technological changes and existing jobs move around the globe. For example, existing firms in the U.S. lost on average over one million jobs annually in the period from 1977 to 2005, according to a report of the Kauffman Foundation, while an average of three million jobs were created annually by new firms (Kane, 2010). As a result, there is no sure way to predict what jobs our children will have to take in the future. As the head of PISA, Andrea Schleicher, recently said: “Schools have to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, technologies that have not yet been invented and problems that we don’t know will arise” (Schleicher, 2010). If one does not know what careers are there in the future, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prescribe the knowledge and skills that will make today’s students ready for them.

Are the Common Core Standards relevant?

Jobs that require routine procedure skills and knowledge are increasingly automated or sent to places where such skills and knowledge are abundant with lower cost. As a result, as best selling author Daniel Pink observed, traditionally neglected talents, which he refers to as Right-brained directed skills, including design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning, will become more valuable (Pink, 2006). Economist Richard Florida noticed the increasing importance of creativity in the modern economy ten years ago in his best seller The Rise of the Creative Class (Florida, 2012). And economist Philip Auerswald convincingly proves the case for the need of entrepreneurs to bring the coming prosperity in his 2012 book (Auerswald, 2012). These are just antagonistic to the core subjects prescribed by the Common Core and tested by international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS, which are mostly left-brained cognitive skills.

Does Common Core support global competence?

The world our children will live in is global, not local as before. Given the interconnectedness and interdependence of economies, the rise of global challenges such as climate change, and the ease of movement across national borders, one’s birthplace no longer determines his or her future living space or whom he or she may be working for or with. Thus to be ready to live in this global world requires the knowledge and abilities to interact with people who are not born and raised in the same local community. But the Common Core does not include an element to prepare the future generations to live in this globalized world and interact with people from different cultures.

What opportunities we may be missing?

Globalization and technological changes, while presenting tremendous challenges, bring vast opportunities. Globalization, for example, greatly expands the pool of potential customers for products and services. Niche talents that used to only be of interest to a small fraction of people may not be of much value locally, because the total population of a given community is small. In the globalized world, the potential customers could number seven billion. Even a small fraction of the seven billion can be significant, and talents that may be of little value in a given location can be very valuable in another country. Globalization and technology today enable products and services to reach almost any corner of the world. But the Common Core, by forcing children to master the same curriculum, essentially discriminates against talents that are not consistent with their prescribed knowledge and skills. Students who are otherwise talented but do not do well in these chosen subjects are often sent to spend more time on the core subjects, retained for another grade, and deprived of the opportunity to develop their talents in other ways.

In summary, the efforts to develop common curricula nationally and internationally are simply working to perfect an outdated paradigm. The outcomes are precisely the opposite of the talents we need for the new era. A well organized, tightly controlled, and well-executed education system can transmit the prescribed content much more effectively than one that is less organized, loosely monitored, and less unified. In the meantime, the latter allows for exceptions with more room for individual exploration and experimentation. The question is what matters in the future: Do we want individuals who are good at taking tests, or individuals who are creative and entrepreneurial? I believe the answer is the latter.

#### Education is poor now is because of standardizing education through “reforms” like Common Core.

Garland 14 – Sarah Garland, Executive editor of The Hechinger Report, former Spencer Fellow in Education Reporting at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Joint master’s degree in journalism and Latin American studies from New York University, 2014 (“US education: How we got where we are today”, Christian Science Monitor, August 17, Available Online at http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2014/0817/US-education-How-we-got-where-we-are-today, accessed 7/6/15, KM)

The standardized state of US schools today grew from the Reagan blueprint, ‘A Nation at Risk.’ Why that legacy matters now.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — On the last day of school in June, Principal Aurelia Curtis was harried. An auditorium full of teachers was waiting for her. But instead of congratulating them on a good year and sending off three retiring staff members, she was in her office signing the last of the 742 teacher evaluation forms for her staff of nearly 150 that she had to finish by an end-of-year deadline. Ms. Curtis, a stern but beloved leader who shares her name with Curtis High School here in Staten Island, N.Y., where she began her career 30 years ago, spends more time these days filling out intensive teacher evaluations required by the state than she does talking to her teachers. Or that’s how it often feels. “It has tied me up in so much paperwork,” she says. “I don’t have the time to have meaningful conversations with teachers.” Likewise, her teachers and students spend less time in meaningful discussions and more time worrying about the tests that will help decide those teacher evaluation scores. “We’re trying to quantify everything,” she says. “The new system, is it better? I’m not convinced.” Yet as the school year opens and students return to the sprawling Gothic building on a hill with views of the Statue of Liberty, Curtis will be starting on another pile of 700-plus forms meant to tell her which of her teachers are good and which aren’t. The new evaluation system, along with many of the other changes roiling American education, can be traced directly back to a set of old ideas – as old as Curtis’s tenure at Curtis High. The push for new teacher evaluations, new standards, new curricula, and new tests began with “A Nation at Risk,” a report published in 1983 that busy educators like Curtis usually don’t have much time to think about. But in many ways, the report has defined the careers of a generation of educators like her – and the educations of a generation of American public school students. “A Nation at Risk,” commissioned by the Reagan administration in 1981, was a scathing appraisal of public education. Its authors – a federal commission of leaders from government, business, and education – spent two years examining American schools, and they were appalled at what they found. Standardized test and SAT scores were falling. The United States was dropping behind competitors such as Japan. The public education system was so bad that not only were US students unprepared to join an increasingly high-tech workforce, 23 million Americans were functionally illiterate. Worst of all, the report concluded, Americans were complacent as their schools crumbled, threatening the very “fabric of society.” One of the most famous lines in the report said: “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” The document set off panic in a once self-satisfied nation and launched a movement to transform the public education system. A generation later, its effects are powerful. The excoriation of American schooling is what most people remember, but its actual legacy is ingrained in public education today. The report’s five proposed solutions – improving content, raising standards, overhauling the teaching profession, adding time to the school day and year, and improving leadership and fiscal support – are clear in current reform. They can be seen in the spread of the Common Core standards, a set of streamlined but intense new standards introduced in 2009 that, though controversial, are still in use in more than 40 states; in new teacher ratings based partly on standardized test scores; and in the invention and rise of charter schools with longer school days and no union contracts. Initially embraced by a coalition of conservatives and liberals, the solutions offered in “A Nation at Risk” stoked a backlash among many on the left who argued that its criticisms of public education were over the top and that its solutions ignored poverty and inequity in the system. But the Republican-driven revolution is being driven home, as never before, by a Democratic president. The Obama administration admits there’s a connection. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has said the report was “influential” in the administration’s education reform strategy. • • • So why are ideas from a report that once provoked fury among many on the left having their heyday now? Milton Goldberg, who was the executive director of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which issued “A Nation at Risk,” believes the answer is simple. “When we did the ‘Nation at Risk,’ we collected dozens and dozens of research papers and recorded testimony all over the country,” he says. “We finally came to the conclusion that those five things, they’re the essential legs of a five-legged footstool that you must address in order to improve education.” “The legs of that stool haven’t changed very much. What’s changed is what you do about them,” added Mr. Goldberg, now chancellor of Jones International University, a for-profit institution in Centennial, Colo. Indeed, the fallout from “A Nation at Risk” has not always been what its writers expected. Before “A Nation at Risk,” the federal government’s role in education was minimal, as the report’s authors believed was proper, and Reagan had even wanted to abolish the federal Education Department. The government had mainly focused on finishing the work of desegregation. Afterward, the federal government became one of the main drivers of reform, and “A Nation at Risk” became the blueprint. And it never mentioned charter schools or school choice. Now, there are nearly 6,000 charters nationwide, up from 1,500 in the year 2000, and thousands of district schools are being remade in the same image thanks to state and federal policies that borrow heavily from ideas in “A Nation at Risk.” But as many policy prescriptions from the report and the movement it fueled become reality, they’re sparking a another backlash among those who say the country has embraced the worst of “A Nation at Risk” – an overhyped sense of crisis and business-focused mentality – and turned its back on the report’s best ideas about empowering teachers, raising expectations for students, and identifying and training better school leaders. “For more than 30 years, U.S. education leaders have been like a dog chasing its tail,” Diane Ravitch, an education historian and assistant education secretary under President George W. Bush, wrote in an e-mail interview. “What has happened is tragic. And it started with ‘A Nation at Risk.’ ”

### A2: Need Common Core to Solve Income Inequality

#### Common Core does not solve income inequality — it just distracts from the root cause of corporate control. Only the plan breaks the corporate stranglehold on American education.

Krugman 15 – Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize-winning American economist, Op-Ed columnist at The New York Times, Professor of Economics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, Centenary Professor at the London School of Economics, ranked among the most influential economic thinkers in the US, 2015 (“Knowledge Isn’t Power”, The New York Times, February 23, Available Online at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/23/opinion/paul-krugman-knowledge-isnt-power.html?\_r=0, accessed 7/7/15, KM)

Regular readers know that I sometimes mock “very serious people” — politicians and pundits who solemnly repeat conventional wisdom that sounds tough-minded and realistic. The trouble is that sounding serious and being serious are by no means the same thing, and some of those seemingly tough-minded positions are actually ways to dodge the truly hard issues. The prime example of recent years was, of course, Bowles-Simpsonism — the diversion of elite discourse away from the ongoing tragedy of high unemployment and into the supposedly crucial issue of how, exactly, we will pay for social insurance programs a couple of decades from now. That particular obsession, I’m happy to say, seems to be on the wane. But my sense is that there’s a new form of issue-dodging packaged as seriousness on the rise. This time, the evasion involves trying to divert our national discourse about inequality into a discussion of alleged problems with education. And the reason this is an evasion is that whatever serious people may want to believe, soaring inequality isn’t about education; it’s about power. Just to be clear: I’m in favor of better education. Education is a friend of mine. And it should be available and affordable for all. But what I keep seeing is people insisting that educational failings are at the root of still-weak job creation, stagnating wages and rising inequality. This sounds serious and thoughtful. But it’s actually a view very much at odds with the evidence, not to mention a way to hide from the real, unavoidably partisan debate. The education-centric story of our problems runs like this: We live in a period of unprecedented technological change, and too many American workers lack the skills to cope with that change. This “skills gap” is holding back growth, because businesses can’t find the workers they need. It also feeds inequality, as wages soar for workers with the right skills but stagnate or decline for the less educated. So what we need is more and better education. My guess is that this sounds familiar — it’s what you hear from the talking heads on Sunday morning TV, in opinion articles from business leaders like Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, in “framing papers” from the Brookings Institution’s centrist Hamilton Project. It’s repeated so widely that many people probably assume it’s unquestionably true. But it isn’t. For one thing, is the pace of technological change really that fast? “We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters,” the venture capitalist Peter Thiel has snarked. Productivity growth, which surged briefly after 1995, seems to have slowed sharply. Furthermore, there’s no evidence that a skills gap is holding back employment. After all, if businesses were desperate for workers with certain skills, they would presumably be offering premium wages to attract such workers. So where are these fortunate professions? You can find some examples here and there. Interestingly, some of the biggest recent wage gains are for skilled manual labor — sewing machine operators, boilermakers — as some manufacturing production moves back to America. But the notion that highly skilled workers are generally in demand is just false. Finally, while the education/inequality story may once have seemed plausible, it hasn’t tracked reality for a long time. “The wages of the highest-skilled and highest-paid individuals have continued to increase steadily,” the Hamilton Project says. Actually, the inflation-adjusted earnings of highly educated Americans have gone nowhere since the late 1990s. So what is really going on? Corporate profits have soared as a share of national income, but there is no sign of a rise in the rate of return on investment. How is that possible? Well, it’s what you would expect if rising profits reflect monopoly power rather than returns to capital. As for wages and salaries, never mind college degrees — all the big gains are going to a tiny group of individuals holding strategic positions in corporate suites or astride the crossroads of finance. Rising inequality isn’t about who has the knowledge; it’s about who has the power. Now, there’s a lot we could do to redress this inequality of power. We could levy higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, and invest the proceeds in programs that help working families. We could raise the minimum wage and make it easier for workers to organize. It’s not hard to imagine a truly serious effort to make America less unequal. But given the determination of one major party to move policy in exactly the opposite direction, advocating such an effort makes you sound partisan. Hence the desire to see the whole thing as an education problem instead. But we should recognize that popular evasion for what it is: a deeply unserious fantasy.

### Common Core Language Standards Bad

Stephen Krashen, January 25, 2014, Schools Matter, The Common Core: A Disaster for Libraries, A Disaster for Language Arts, A Disaster for American Education, Knowledge Quest 42 (3), <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/the-common-core-disaster-for-libraries.html> DOA: 10-26-15

Despite the claim that the standards do not tell teachers how to teach, the nature of the language arts standards (especially Reading: Foundational Skills, Writing, and Language) make it hard for teachers to do anything but direct instruction.   
First, the standards have accepted in full the conclusions of the National Reading Panel: “Materials that are aligned to the standards should provide explicit and systematic instruction and diagnostic support in concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and fluency,” Coleman and Pimental, K-2 (2012a, 2012b), (page 2), as well as text structure (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010a) and grammar (CCSS Initiative,

2010b). The creators of the language arts standards appear to be unaware of the extensive and deep criticism of the National Reading Panel's conclusions, and the unimpressive results of Reading First, which was based on the these conclusions (Garan, 2001, 2002; Krashen, 2001b; 2005; 2009; Allington, 2002; Coles, 2003).   
Second, the common core standards are so demanding that there will be little time for anything not directly linked to the standards in English language arts classes. Nor should there be, according to the Publisher’s Criteria: “By underscoring what matters most in the standards, the criteria illustrate what shifts must take place in the next generation of curricula, including paring away elements that distract or are at odds with the Common Core State Standards.” (Coleman and Pimental, Publishers, Criteria, 3-12, page 1). As Ashley Hastings has pointed out, the common core is clearly more than a “core”: it is the entire apple.   
Third, constant high-stakes testing ensures direct teaching. As noted above, the standards will be enforced by a massive amount of testing, including “interim” testing through the academic year, to make sure students stay on their “educational trajectory.” (Duncan 2009). Performance on these tests will have serious consequences for students, for teachers, and, we are told, even for schools of education: “We need comprehensive data systems that do three things, track students throughout their educational trajectory, ... track students back to teachers...track teachers back to their schools of education.” (Duncan, 2009). The pressure to stick with what is in the standards will be extreme, and the force of constant testing will ensure that direct teaching methods will be used; educators will be concerned that there is no time for the target structures to emerge naturally; it may not happen in time for the next test.   
In short, it is likely that language arts will consist entirely of direct instruction, with no time for self-selected reading. This is in conflict with the massive research that shows direct teaching of aspects of literacy produces very limited results and that most of our literacy and academic language competence is the result of reading, especially self-selected reading.

#### Teachers evaluated and punished under the Race to the Top tests

Valerie Strauss, April 22, 2014, Washington Post, 11 problems created by the standardized testing obsession, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/22/11-problems-created-by-the-standardized-testing-obsession/> DOA: 11-4-15

The Obama administration’s “Race to the Top” initiative coerces states to use student standardized test scores to evaluate teachers even though the exams were never intended for this purpose and the results are not reliable indicators a teacher’s effectiveness. This “test and punish” approach to teacher evaluation has caused some schools and districts to ignore other factors affecting student achievement such as poverty and socioeconomic status.

#### Common Core undermines self-free reading

Stephen Krashen, January 25, 2014, Schools Matter, The Common Core: A Disaster for Libraries, A Disaster for Language Arts, A Disaster for American Education, Knowledge Quest 42 (3), <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/the-common-core-disaster-for-libraries.html> DOA: 10-26-15

The CCSS disparages self-selected free reading. This quote from Appendix A of the ELA standards presents the creators' position on free reading:   
“Students need opportunities to stretch their reading abilities but also to experience the satisfaction and pleasure of easy, fluent reading within them, both of which the Standards allow for" (CCSS Initiative 2010b, 9).

The quote sends the message that hard reading requiring grim determination is the real stuff, the true way to "stretch reading abilities." Easier, more comprehensible reading that we actually enjoy is fine for a break, but only to experience some "satisfaction and pleasure."   
The ELA Standard's Appendix A does not cite any of the plentiful research that strongly indicates that reading that does not require struggle is the source of nearly all of our literacy competence, that it is the bridge between "conversational" language and "academic" language.   
Appendix A, along with the rest of the ELA standards, has very little respect for the power of reading. It assumes that grammar must be taught directly, even though many studies show that our grammatical competence is largely the result of reading. ELA Apprendiz A barely acknowledges that vocabulary is the result of reading, maintaining that "direct study is ... essential"(CCSS Initiative 2010b, p. 35). Appendix A states that "at most between 5 and 15

percent of new words encountered upon first reading are retained" (CCSS Initiative 2010b, p. 32), which is not what the studies show: Studies actually show that when readers see a new word in print, they typically pick up a small part of its meaning, about 5-15%; as they read more, they encounter the word more and gradually acquire the meaning. Appendix A does not point out that research, including studies cited in Appendix A, show that if people read enough, a 5-15% increase in acquisition of a new word's meaning each time it is encountered is more than enough to account for vocabulary growth.)   
The common core standards do not allow “easy reading”: The publisher's criteria explaims that materials for independent reading “need to include texts at students’ own reading level as well as texts with complexity levels that will challenge and motivate students.” (Coleman and Pimental, 2012b, p. 7) Nothing below the readers' current official level is allowed.   
The creators of the CCSS seem not to be aware that reading below one's current official level can be beneficial; reading level is an average – "easy" texts often contain plenty of language above one's level; easy reading provides background knowledge; and easy reading can increase enthusiasm for more reading (Krashen, 2005).

#### High stakes Common Core tests generate anxiety and are used for commercial purposes

Editors of *Rethinking Schools, 2013,*  The Trouble with Common Core, <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/27_04/edit274.shtml> DOA: 11-3-15

Reports from the first wave of Common Core testing are already confirming these fears. This spring students, parents, and teachers in New York schools responded to administration of new Common Core tests developed by Pearson Inc. with a general outcry against their length, difficulty, and inappropriate content. Pearson included corporate logos and promotional material in reading passages. Students reported feeling overstressed and underprepared—meeting the tests with shock, anger, tears, and anxiety. Administrators requested guidelines for handling tests students had vomited on. Teachers and principals complained about the disruptive nature of the testing process and many parents encouraged their children to opt out.

### Corporate Control Impact Backlines

#### Corporate Control and influence in academic spheres leads to an inverted totalitarianism which precludes any concern for morality.

Seybold 14 — Peter Seybold is an associate professor at Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), Department of Sociology,2014 ("Servants of Power: Higher Education in an Era of Corporate Control," Truthout, 6-22-2014, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24305-servants-of-power-higher-education-in-an-era-of-corporate-control, Accessed 7-16-2015)//CM

Over the last 40 years, we have witnessed a dramatic change in the structure of power in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, a one-sided class war has taken place and the ruling class has been winning. It has altered the relationship between capitalism and democracy, and in turn has subjugated a variety of institutions to the logic of capitalism. Douglas Frazier, former head of the United Auto Workers (UAW), took note of this class war early on, and more recently super-rich investor Warren Buffet has also commented on how his class has waged a very successful class war against the rest of the American population. Academia has really been slow to assess the changing dynamics of capitalism and the erosion of democracy in the United States. Those who have written about this tidal wave of change have been marginalized by being labeled conspiracy theorists or radicals with an axe to grind - or professors who have not been able to climb the ladder to academic stardom. One sees little discussion in mainstream academic publications of the profound influence that the Powell Memorandum (1971) has had on key institutions that make up the US cultural apparatus. Powell, who later became a Supreme Court justice, argued in his memo that business had to wage a counterattack against the left in American society. He urged the business community to mobilize and to finance conservative foundations, think tanks, media organizations and endowed professorships in order to advance a cultural war carried out by elites. Powell argued in his memo to the US Chamber of Commerce that business had to retake control over the media and the university as part of an orchestrated campaign to alter social and political discourse in America. Powell's proposal was certainly ambitious and involved a long battle to bend institutions in the direction of the interests of the business community. This campaign was in direct response to gains made by the social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s and the legislation that was passed in response to these movements. In Powell's vision, the goal was not just to blunt the influence of left and progressive forces in the United States; it was to fundamentally shift the country in a conservative direction by weakening labor unions, attacking the social wage, repressing social movements and recapturing the media and higher education. What was to transpire over the course of the next 40 years largely followed the outlines of Powell's proposal and dramatically altered the balance of power in the country by eroding democratic institutions and restricting public spaces. It is not an exaggeration to say that during this period, conservatives completely out-organized left and progressive social forces and changed the landscape of social and political discourse. Business ultimately benefited the most from this cultural war, although its major concern was - as always - commodifying more and more areas of life, expanding profitability and reconstituting ideological control, rather than engaging in the politics of morality. The long-term consequences of this orchestrated campaign have resulted in the degradation of life in the United States as the institutions which previously undergirded the social safety net have come under fierce attack. In the process, the opportunity for the American people to hold the powerful accountable has been reduced to rituals of democracy which are more about form than substance. As Sheldon Wolin has eloquently argued in his book, Democracy Inc. (2008), the net result of this extended campaign by elites is a managed democracy with a demobilized public that blurs the lines between corporations and government and eviscerates concerns about the public good. Wolin maintains that the present social and political formation in the United States might best be described as "inverted totalitarianism." The political arena is structurally incapable of addressing the major problems facing the American people. Taking the Powell Memorandum seriously and understanding what Wolin has asserted about the US political system does not involve embracing conspiracy theory. It is not the case that elites in the United States developed a plan to recapture major institutions and bend them toward the interests of business and did so without encountering resistance. As Marx was so fond of reminding us, capitalism always generates its own opposition and in the period from the mid-1970s to the present, there has been considerable resistance bubbling underneath the surface of American society. The long-term consequences of a successful cultural war by the right have been to shift the balance of social forces and institutions in the direction of business and to marginalize social justice movements. As the Occupy Movement illustrated, efforts by elites were unable to stamp out the opposition or contain the outrage generated by running the country solely for the interests of mega corporations. As Antonio Gramsci argued, hegemony is never completely successful; it has to be constantly defended, revised and reproduced, and this involves a struggle between different social classes. However, probably the most insidious effect which hegemony has had on American society is that it has shifted the range of debate to the right and redefined the acceptable policy options available to the major political parties. The Democrats now represent center/right policy alternatives and the Republicans now represent right/extreme right policy prescriptions. Consequently, the political arena is structurally incapable of addressing the major problems facing the American people. The height of hegemony is when even the form and content of the opposition has been affected by the institutionalized thought structure. This is exactly what has happened in the United States when social movements have been marginalized or repressed, and when critics of society have been effectively contained. Consequently, the range of debate has been narrowed and the institutions that previously were independent and served as the conscience of society have been integrated into the social order. Wolin's nightmare of inverted totalitarianism no longer seems far-fetched.

#### Without changing educational institutions and resisting neoliberal control, we risk a fundamental erosion of democracy and social justice movements, especially those centered in academia

Seybold 14 — Peter Seybold is an associate professor at Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), Department of Sociology,2014 ("Servants of Power: Higher Education in an Era of Corporate Control," Truthout, 6-22-2014, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24305-servants-of-power-higher-education-in-an-era-of-corporate-control, Accessed 7-16-2015)//CM

So how does academia fit into the grim picture painted above? Higher education, I would argue, has mimicked the trends in the larger society and can often be seen as a microcosm of this larger struggle. More and more universities and colleges in the United States have fallen into line and have functioned as servants of power. Fittingly, in 1984, I was asked to make a presentation at another university. I entitled my talk "Toward a Corporate Service Station." I believed at the time that the university was being pushed and pulled in a direction that threatened its goals and ideals. Thirty years later, I believe even more strongly that the university has lost its soul and has auctioned off its services to the highest bidder. There is no better example of this trend than the growth of for-profit universities that make bundles of money from desperate students while strangling them with incredible levels of debt in pursuit of dubious credentials. However, it is too easy to just put this at the doorstep of for-profit educational institutions, because they are doing what they were created to do - make money and commodify education. Even more disturbing is that universities and colleges are aligning themselves with corporate America. In 2008, I published a short essay called "The Struggle Against Corporate Takeover of the University" in Socialism and Democracy. I continue to be interested in the university as a microcosm of the larger struggle in American society involving the commodification of culture and the attack on the commons. I am also interested in linking what is happening in higher education to the attack on the middle and working classes: the growing polarization of American society, and the weakening connection between education, the American Dream and the promotion of democratic principles. As Henry Giroux has so aptly put it, we are experiencing "the near death of the university as a democratic sphere." Things have become considerably worse for universities and colleges since 2008, and the attack on these institutions has further degraded campus life and has put the traditional mission of higher education in peril. Faced with budget cuts, hostile legislatures, university administrators who increasingly identify themselves with corporate CEOs, and communities which have been buffeted by the forces unleashed by the economic crash, universities are increasingly being run like mega corporations. In Giroux's words, "Casino capitalism does more than infuse market values into every aspect of higher education; it wages a full-fledged assault on public goods, democratic public spheres, and the role of education in creating an informed and enlightened citizenry." We don't have to accept the assault on university ideals and programs as inevitable or as another example of "there is no alternative." Instead we need to forge a common understanding across sectors of the university community to resist corporate takeover of academe. To be successful in this project will require going beyond the academic community and reaching out to students, parents, workers and community members who have been adversely affected by the direction the university has taken. We must indeed see the university as an arena for struggle in order to revive higher education and its ideals and to contribute to the larger struggle for democracy and social justice. As someone who has worked in higher education for his entire career, I sense a tremendous unease and decline in morale in academe. Some would say that this is normal because the university has been subject to the same technological forces as any other institution and inevitably this leads to changing the way people work. Surely, there is an element of faculty grumbling about having to do things differently and being subjected to increased scrutiny. But there is more than just this going on in higher education. Running a university like a business degrades all aspects of university life and negatively affects administrators, faculty, professional staff, workers, students, parents and the community. Commodifying education alienates people from each other, from the institution, from their work, and diminishes people's expectations. Corporate logic changes priorities and changes the allocation of resources for the institution. To argue against the corporatization of the university is not to harken back to the "good old days" in academe because, as Noam Chomsky has argued, "we should put aside any idea that there was once a 'golden age.'" As Chomsky describes it, "things were different and in some ways better in the past, but far from perfect." (Chomsky, 2014). He goes on to say that "traditional universities were for example, extremely hierarchical, with very little democratic participation in decision-making." While his description is accurate, academe still maintained relative autonomy from society, and also paid lip service to ideals that go back to the Enlightenment. The university did provide a rather unique public space to think, debate and criticize, and at least at one time, tried to teach students to be better, more engaged, public citizens. It was also generally the case that those who worked in academe believed that the institution was exempt from some of the pressures which affected other institutions, and that the university, despite what was happening in the larger society, would be successful in protecting itself from the corrosive effects of capitalist society. To be sure, in a previous era, many sought work in academe to maintain their independence, escape the restrictions imposed by capitalist society and work in a more humane and less commodified workplace. All of this has changed in the last 30 years or so as universities have had to adapt to a rapidly changing social, political and economic environment. Instead of leading the fight against the decline of the public sphere and the erosion of democracy, universities have accepted the conditions imposed on them by neoliberalism and have adjusted to the new status quo. Instead of speaking truth to power they have more often become servants of power. The consequences for academe have been catastrophic for the institution and its mission, for the general public, and for the wellbeing of democracy. If the university fails to perform its functions to teach students to think critically and to serve as the conscience of society, what other institution in American society will assume these responsibilities? As Giroux suggests, "Critical thinking and a literate public have become dangerous to those who want to celebrate orthodoxy over dialogue, emotion over reason, and ideological certainty over thoughtfulness."Wider Implications of Corporate Cooptation of Academia The wider implications of the corporate cooptation of higher education and the success of the cultural war waged by elites since the 1970s are clearly explained by Sheldon Wolin: Inverted totalitarianism, although at times capable of harassing or discrediting critics, has instead cultivated a loyal intelligentsia of its own. Through a combination of government contracts, corporate and foundation funds, joint projects involving university and corporate researchers, and wealthy individual donors, universities (especially research universities), intellectuals, scholars and researchers have been seamlessly integrated into the system… During the months leading up to and following the invasion of Iraq, university and college campuses, which had been such notorious centers of opposition to the Vietnam War that politicians and publicists spoke seriously of the need to 'pacify the campuses,' hardly stirred. The Academy had become self-pacifying (Wolin, 2008:68). College has become "the great unleveler." The seamless integration of higher education into the logic of corporate capitalism has created a new natural order of things where critics of the new social arrangements are chastised for not keeping up with the requirements of the post-modern economy and holding on to the past as the world passes them by. The university, it has been argued, had to reinvent itself to adjust to the current circumstances or it would lose out in the competition. The market would now dictate what the best practices would be in higher education and the guidelines for leading the institution would be adapted from the corporate world. What follows is an account of the corrosive effects of embracing corporate logic on higher education. Corporatization of higher education has taken its toll on an institution, which previously was considered one of the great triumphs of the American system. Combined with rampant inequality, a college education is now more the province of the privileged and, as The New York Times recently pointed out, college has become "the great unleveler."

#### The corporatization of education has serious implications for teaching, innovation, and social justice movements – these all spill over into society

Seybold 14 — Peter Seybold is an associate professor at Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), Department of Sociology,2014 ("Servants of Power: Higher Education in an Era of Corporate Control," Truthout, 6-22-2014, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24305-servants-of-power-higher-education-in-an-era-of-corporate-control, Accessed 7-16-2015)//CM

For those from the richest fifth, the annual cost of attending a four-year college has inched up from 6 percent of family income in 1971 to 9 percent in 2011. For everyone else, the change is formidable. For those in the poorest fifth, costs at State U have skyrocketed from 42 percent of family income to 114 percent. A tiered system has evolved where the top 20 percent of the population is able to afford a university education. The bottom 80 percent is increasingly burdened with debt if they pursue post-secondary education, and they are consigned to schools in which the college experience often resembles vocational education. These trends are consistent with the imposition of a neoliberal agenda on a variety of American institutions. The impact of corporatization distorts and reshapes the university, which in turn affects American society. I will focus on four areas which come to mind when examining the corrosive effects of corporatization on the university: 1) the way in which universities are administered in this corporate age, 2) the state of academic labor and how it has changed over time, 3) the redefinition of university education and the alteration of the curriculum to meet corporate influences, and 4) the decline of public intellectuals and the diminished role of universities as independent centers of thought and debate. Henry Giroux, in his piece entitled "Beyond Neoliberal Miseducation," cites Debra Leigh Scott who points out that "administrators now outnumber faculty on every campus across the country." The top-down control of university governance by administrators has severely compromised faculty governance. Universities now recruit former CEOs of major companies or former prominent politicians to run complex university systems. Many of these recruits have no prior experience in academe and are not steeped in the traditions of the university community which they seek to lead. At Purdue University, the former governor of Indiana, Mitch Daniels, now serves as president of the university. Almost immediately after Daniels took over at Purdue, a firestorm of protest by faculty and students ensued. This is just one example, but the time-tested way of doing things in a university system has been systematically dismantled. Like the larger society, an illusion of democratic participation in decision-making has replaced actual participation in university decisions and dissenters have been threatened with sanctions for questioning the current institutional arrangements. Governor Pat McCrory of North Carolina illustrates clearly the mentality of conservative politicians and their attitudes toward university education. McCrory has argued: "If you want to take gender studies, that's fine, go to a private school. But I don't want to subsidize that if that's not going to get someone a job." As I mentioned earlier, university administrators have largely adopted business management principles, and units within a university are now evaluated as stand-alone units responsible for paying for themselves. This practice has seriously affected cooperation between departments and interaction with service units on campus, and has set off a wave of competition between schools within a university. Running a university like a business is relatively easy to institutionalize, but its intended and unintended consequences degrade the university environment and negatively impact the morale of everyone on campus. Under this system, the university runs more efficiently within a very narrowly conceived understanding of efficiency, but over time it tends to distort the allocation of resources on campus by shifting money and personnel to segments of campus that generate profits, attract grants and embrace neoliberal orthodoxy. An illusion of democratic participation in decision-making has replaced actual participation in university decisions and dissenters have been threatened with sanctions for questioning the current institutional arrangements. The area of campus in which the harshest effects of corporatization can be seen is the organization of academic labor. More and more faculty these days are hired off tenure-track in order to cut costs and establish greater control over academic labor. In 2007, according to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 70 percent of the faculty on college campuses were adjuncts and other contingent employees. These trends continue as tenure-track faculty who retire are replaced by adjunct faculty. The pay of adjunct faculty is deplorable and their working conditions are just as bad as they travel between part-time teaching jobs and have little time - or even an office in which - to talk with their students. As James Hoff and other critics of the current practices of utilizing adjuncts assert, the system of low pay creates a hierarchy within academia and creates even more tiers within the system (Hoff, 2014). Ever mindful of the threat to their economic livelihood, contingent faculty have to toe the line and are not accorded the common courtesies extended to full-time faculty because their job security is at risk. Hoff goes on to argue that universities now spend more on administration than they do on teachers. According to Benjamin Ginsberg's book The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters, between 1985 and 2005 administrative spending increased by 85 percent and the number of administrative support staff increased by a whopping 240 percent. At the same time spending on faculty increased by only around 50 percent. Hoff also goes on to make the important point that students who are most in need, poor and working class students, first generation students and students of color are most frequently taught by adjunct faculty. The casualization of academic labor thus affects the quality of instruction by restricting the time that faculty can spend with students and the possibilities for mentoring opportunities. In addition, low pay for contingent faculty also calls into question whether someone can maintain an adequate standard of living by teaching in college or junior college. Mirroring the inequality in the larger society, the average administrative salary, for instance, at the University of Vermont was $210,851 per year. This was more than seven times the annual salary of maintenance workers at the university (Jacobs, Counterpunch, Feb. 21-23, 2014). As tuition and other fees on campus skyrocket, the money generated is disproportionately allocated to the most privileged segments of campus, while the lowest wage workers on campus often qualify for food stamps. In a piece in Salon, Keith Heller has called the current practices at US colleges and universities "the Wal-Mart-ization of higher education." He argues that more and more faculty are underpaid and undervalued. The casualization of academic labor is gaining increased attention nationwide as parents, students and the university community come to grips with the skewed priorities of University, Inc. Some of the basic principles underlying effective pedagogy, such as small class size, individual attention and the importance of mentoring, are being sacrificed in order to increase head count, limit labor costs and create a one-size-fits-all educational experience. Some of the basic principles underlying effective pedagogy, such as small class size, individual attention and the importance of mentoring, are being sacrificed in order to increase head count, limit labor costs and create a one-size-fits-all educational experience. A key aspect of the movement to reorder the priorities of higher education is the redefinition of the university experience in line with neoliberal principles. Reflecting the inequality in the larger society, the college experience is being segmented by the kind of school that students are able to afford. Students from the top tier continue to enjoy the benefits of practices which are now increasingly only found at elite universities and colleges. In other tiers, for instance, a liberal arts education is devalued and in public universities that are not in the top tier, the educational experience emphasizes finding an area of study that will yield a job. Training has often been substituted for a broad liberal arts experience and students influenced by the difficult job market also question why they need to take subjects that are not directly related to what they will do when they leave college.

#### Education remains open to corporate control and abuse – this precludes critical thinking and questioning the world around us.

Seybold 14 — Peter Seybold is an associate professor at Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), Department of Sociology,2014 ("Servants of Power: Higher Education in an Era of Corporate Control," Truthout, 6-22-2014, Available Online at http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/24305-servants-of-power-higher-education-in-an-era-of-corporate-control, Accessed 7-16-2015)//CM

The promise of the university has been subverted by corporate power. The orchestrated attack on the university has taken its toll. The university used to be a place where critical thinking was encouraged, where the imagination was expanded, and democratic practices were extended. Corporate influence over the university has fundamentally changed the trajectory of the institution. Of course, universities bolstered the status quo in the past, as well, but they did provide opportunities for radical thinkers and they were not as dependent on corporate funding in the past. The struggle against the corporate university is part of a larger struggle for social justice in American society. As I have argued in this paper, higher education is not exempt from the social and political forces that impacted other key institutions in American society. However, the fate of higher education has not been decided and the corporate restructuring of the academy is being resisted. Higher education and its professoriate have been targeted because they represent a major reservoir of resistance to corporate control and the erosion of democracy. As Antonio Gramsci reminded us, hegemony is not easily accomplished. It involves social, political and cultural struggle to produce and reproduce the dominant order. According to Gramsci, hegemony is never complete - it is constantly resisted even if only in a fragmented way. Just as there has been a war waged on women and the poor in the United States, there is a cultural war being waged on the ideals of the American university. Higher education and its professoriate have been targeted because they represent a major reservoir of resistance to corporate control and the erosion of democracy. The last thing that elites want to encourage is a space in which critical thinking is nourished and a liberal arts education is valued. Universities naturally are places where one might find people who are trained to "think big," and who have developed an understanding of the inherent contradictions of capitalism. It is for this reason that a campaign to restructure the academy into a corporate service station has taken place. In the struggle for hegemony in American society, the university as traditionally understood is contradictory in nature. On the one hand, it has the potential to be a very unique commodity - one which makes bundles of money and one which helps elite ideas and elite ideology become hegemonic. On the other hand, it can play a crucial role in questioning the dominant ideology and producing critical thinkers. The contradictory role played by universities in American society has made higher education an arena for struggle over the last 30 years. Corporate elites seek to enlist the university in its battle to impose its will on the rest of society. They seek to blunt the critical impulses of the university and reinforce its role as a defender of neoliberalism. The challenge to everyone in academia is to resist corporatization of higher education. We still have the capacity to imagine a different university that contributes to the fight to create a different, more peaceful and more democratic society. The goal should be to build a broader coalition for social justice, to reimagine the future and to create a counter hegemony. To do these things we must firmly reject the current path. We must be clear that the university stands for something greater and more humane than simply being a servant to power.

# Related – College Standardized Admissions Tests

## Required Standardized Admissions Tests for College Good

### Should Improve, Not Abandon, Admissions Tests

#### Improved admissions tests can be effective

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

In Chapter 5, Robert J. Sternberg describes his four types of intelligence (analytical, creative, practical, and wisdom) and how new tests can measure those four and do so with greater predictive power than, and without any of the social biases of, the SAT. Sternberg’s admissions experiment, as Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University, pointed to a new direction, moving beyond the scientific pitfalls and social disparities of the past. Impressed with Sternberg’s results, Oklahoma State University persuaded him to leave Tufts to become OSU’s Provost. In an interview with Inside Higher Ed, Sternberg explained the move as an opportunity to implement a new admissions system. He said, “our society has a real problem … its obsessive preoccupation with test scores…. We need to be concentrating on developing wise and ethical leaders— instead we are developing people who are consummate Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 217-222). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### GPA and achievement tests better predictors of college success for low income students than SATs

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

But what about the students we’re most concerned about— those with high ability who have attended poor schools? The California Department of Education rates the state’s high schools based on the results from its standardized testing program for grades K– 12. For schools in the bottom quintile of the ratings— hard as I found it to believe— the achievement tests did slightly better than the SAT in predicting how the test-takers would perform as college freshmen. What about students from families with low incomes? Children of parents with poor education? Here’s another stunner: after controlling for parental income and education, the independent role of the SAT in predicting freshman GPA disappeared altogether. The effectiveness of high school GPA and of achievement tests to predict freshman GPA was undiminished. All freshman grades are not created equal, so the UC study took the obvious differences into account. It broke down its results by college campus (an A at Berkeley might not mean the same thing as an A at Santa Cruz) and by freshman major (an A in a humanities course might not mean the same thing as an A in a physical science course). The results were unaffected. Again, the SAT was unnecessary; it added nothing to the forecasts provided by high school grades and achievement tests. Thorough as the Geiser and Studley (2004) presentation was, almost any social science conclusion can be challenged through different data or a different set of analyses. The College Board, which makes many millions of dollars every year from the SAT, had every incentive and ample resources to refute the UC results. But it could not. In 2002, the College Board published its analysis disentangled some statistical issues that the UC study had not and used a different metric to express predictive validity, but its bottom line was effectively identical. Once high school GPA and achievement test scores are known, the incremental value of knowing the SAT score is trivially small. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1534-1536). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Should Develop Effective Standardized Admissions Tests

#### Should develop effective standardized admissions tests

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

For these reasons, we believe that prediction will recede in importance, and other test characteristics will become more critical in designing standardized admissions tests in the future. We will still need to “validate” our tests by demonstrating that they are reasonably correlated with student performance in college; validation remains especially important where tests have adverse impacts on low-income and minority applicants. But beyond some acceptable threshold of predictive validity, decisions about what kinds of assessments to use in college admissions will be driven less by small statistical differences and more by educational policy considerations. In contrast to prediction, the idea of achievement offers a richer paradigm for admissions testing and calls attention to a broader array of characteristics that we should demand of our tests: Admissions tests should be criterion referenced rather than norm referenced: Our primary consideration should not be how an applicant compares with others but whether he or she demonstrates sufficient mastery of college preparatory subjects to benefit from and succeed in college. Admissions tests should have diagnostic utility: Rather than a number or a percentile rank, tests should provide students with curriculum-related information about areas of strength and areas where they need to devote more study. Admissions tests should exhibit not only predictive validity but face validity: The relationship between the knowledge and skills being tested and those needed for college should be transparent. Admissions tests should be aligned with college preparatory coursework: Assessments should be linked as closely as possible to materials that students encounter in the classroom and should reinforce teaching and learning of a rigorous academic curriculum in our high schools. Admissions tests should minimize the need for test preparation: Although test prep services will probably never disappear entirely, admissions tests should be designed to reward mastery of curriculum content over test-taking skills, so that the best test prep is regular classroom instruction. Finally, admissions tests should send a signal to students: Our tests should send the message that working hard and mastering academic subjects in high school is the most direct route to college. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 882-885). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Criterion-referenced tests that measure achievement should be used in admissions

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Criterion-referenced tests, on the other hand, presuppose a very different philosophy and approach to college admissions. Their purpose is to certify students’ knowledge of college preparatory subjects, and they help to establish a baseline or floor for judging applicants’ readiness for college. Along with high school grades, achievement test scores tell us whether applicants have mastered the foundational knowledge and skills required for college-level work.

### Should Develop Alternatives – Murray

#### Murray thinks universities should use other standardized tests

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

How are we to get rid of the SAT when it is such an established American institution and will be ferociously defended by the College Board and a large test preparation industry? Actually, it could happen quite easily. Admissions officers at elite schools are already familiar with the statistical story I have presented. They know that dropping the SAT would not hinder their selection decisions. Many of them continue to accept the SAT out of inertia— as long as the student has taken the test anyway, it costs nothing to add the scores to the student’s folder. In that context, the arguments for not accepting the SAT can easily find a receptive audience, especially since the SAT is already under such severe criticism for the wrong reasons. Nor is it necessary to convince everyone to take action at the same time. A few high-profile colleges could have a domino effect. Suppose, for example, that this fall Harvard and Stanford were jointly to announce that SAT scores will no longer be accepted. Instead, all applicants to Harvard and Stanford will be required to take four of the College Board’s achievement tests, including a math test and excluding any test for a language used at home. If just those two schools took such a step, many other schools would follow suit immediately, and the rest within a few years. It could happen, and it should happen. There is poignancy in calling for an end to a test conceived for such a noble purpose. But the SAT score, intended as a signal flare for those on the bottom, has become a badge flaunted by those on top. We pay a steep educational and cultural price for a test that no one really needs. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1709-1714). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Affluence Admission Benefit Now

#### Affluence affirmative action now

Daniel Golden, 2013, Daniel Golden, Pulitzer Prize Winner, is Editor-at-Large at Bloomberg News, former Senior Editor at Conde Nast Portfolio, and former Deputy Bureau Chief in the Boston Bureau of the Wall Street Journal. He is the author of The Price of Admission: How America’s Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges— and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The recent reforms do not disturb the fundamental building blocks of an inequitable system— the whole array of admissions preferences that favor the rich, powerful, and famous. Although colleges enjoy nonprofit, tax-free status because they are presumed to serve a social purpose— namely, educating the best students of all backgrounds— these “preferences of privilege” serve a different master: fund-raising. As documented in my book, The Price of Admission (Golden, 2006), more applicants receive special consideration under the preferences of privilege than under affirmative action, and in some cases the admissions break is as big or bigger than the advantage affirmative action confers. At schools that admit only 1 in 10 or 1 in 8 of their applicants, and are the gateway to power and influence in our society, affluent but second-rate students regularly get in ahead of candidates with greater intellectual ability or artistic aptitude. These colleges, most of which have not increased their student body size significantly in years, seek donations by reserving slots for children of privilege while turning away outstanding middle-class and working-class applicants. As Notre Dame’s admissions dean told me, “The poor schmuck who has to get in on his own has to walk on water.” The best-known and most widespread of the preferences of privilege is the boost for alumni children. Except for a few private universities in Japan, the United States is the only country where colleges formally favor alumni offspring. Here, legacy preference is almost universal among private colleges, and it is widespread even at flagship public universities. At most top colleges, 10– 25% of students are legacies, and they are admitted at two to four times the rate of nonlegacies. Brown University, for instance, admitted 33.5% of legacy applicants for the class of 2010, almost three times its overall acceptance rate of 13.8% (Golden, 2010, pp. 73– 76). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 345-349). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### SAT A Counterweight to Affluence Admissions

#### SAT is a counterweight to development and legacy admissions

Daniel Golden, 2013, Daniel Golden, Pulitzer Prize Winner, is Editor-at-Large at Bloomberg News, former Senior Editor at Conde Nast Portfolio, and former Deputy Bureau Chief in the Boston Bureau of the Wall Street Journal. He is the author of The Price of Admission: How America’s Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges— and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

While I have relied heavily on SAT scores in my research to document preferences for children of alumni and donors, I have very ambivalent feelings about the test. I agree with the SAT’s critics that disparities in scoring by race and social class, exacerbated by test prep and other coaching options available to affluent students, are profoundly disturbing. At the same time, though, I am a product of the SAT generation. I was one of the thousands of bright, middle-class, public high school students who were able to attend an elite college at least partly because the test helped extend the vision and reach of the Ivy Leagues beyond a cluster of old-boy prep schools. Ironically, a test that broadened opportunity for so many young people now stands accused of denying that same opportunity to others. Opponents of the SAT often talk as if it is the only instrument of privilege in college admissions— ignoring the preferences for children of legacies and donors. Unlike those preferences, the SAT at least tries to gauge the candidate’s individual merit. And, even granting a bias toward the white and the wealthy, the SAT may remain useful in comparing two candidates within the same racial and economic groups— or when a score goes against type. For instance, if a minority applicant from a low-performing high school does well on the SAT, that score could be a noteworthy indication of academic potential. But if— as in so many of the examples I cited in my book (Golden, 2006)— a legacy or a development applicant, with all of the advantages of wealth and parental education, does poorly on the SAT, that can be a strong signal that he or she may not be serious about learning— and that the admissions staff should resist lobbying on the applicant’s behalf by the development or alumni office. Indeed, without SAT scores to act as a check on these preferences, it is likely that the number of legacies and development admits at elite universities would be even greater than it already is. Today, curbing the clout of alumni and donors in college admissions is more important— and perhaps more difficult— than ever before. With endowments having plummeted in the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression, admissions officials face intense pressure to accept candidates whose parents could replenish the college coffers and to reject more applicants who need financial aid. As Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro observed in 2009, “You’ve always been in an advantaged position to be rich and smart. Now you’re at an even greater advantage” (Fitzpatrick, 2009). Conditions are also ripe for the preferences of privilege to spread to universities in European and Asian countries also affected by the economic downturn. As the public funding on which they are accustomed to relying dries up, such universities are increasingly seeking alumni donations. Can legacy preference be far behind? Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 467-474). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Many Types of College/University Standardized Admission Tests

#### Standardized Testing for college admissions includes more than the SAT/ACT

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Standardized testing for college admissions has seen extraordinary growth over the past century and appears to be on the cusp of still more far-reaching changes. Fewer than 1000 examinees sat for the first College Boards in 1901. Today more than 1.5 million students take the SAT, 1.4 million sit for the ACT, and many students take both. This does not count many more who take preliminary versions of college entrance tests earlier in school, nor does it include those who take the SAT Subject Tests and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Admissions testing continues to be a growth industry, and further innovations such as computer-based assessments with instant scoring, adaptive testing, and “noncognitive” assessment are poised to make their appearance. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 501-506). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Standardized College Admissions Tests Useful

#### Standardized college admissions tests add predictive value

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Whatever the precise reasons, it is useful to begin any discussion of standardized admissions tests with acknowledgment that a student’s record in college preparatory courses in high school remains the best indicator of how the student is likely to perform in college. Standardized tests do add value, however. In our studies at the University of California, for example, we have found that admissions tests add an increment of about 6 percentage points to the explained variance in cumulative college GPA, over and above about 20% of the variance that is accounted for by high school GPA and other academic and socioeconomic factors known at the point of admission (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). And tests can add value in other important ways, beyond prediction, that we shall consider later in this chapter. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 551-555). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Should Use Standardize Subject Tests

#### Relying on SAT II Subject Tests, AP Tests, and IB tests does not operate at the expense of minorities

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The main counterargument to expanding use of such tests in college admissions is the fear that they might harm minority, low-income, or other students from schools with less rigorous curricula. Currently the SAT Subject Tests and AP exams are considered in admissions only at a few highly selective colleges and universities, and the population of test takers is smaller, higher achieving, and less diverse than the general population that takes the SAT or ACT. The fear is that if subject tests were used more widely, students from disadvantaged schools might perform more poorly on them than on tests less closely tied to the curriculum. Experience at the University of California suggests that this fear is unfounded. After introducing its Top 4 Percent Plan in 2001, which extended eligibility for admission to top students in low-performing high schools, the university saw a significant jump in the number of students in these schools who took the three SAT II subject tests that the university required. Low-income and minority students performed at least as well on these tests, and in some cases better, than they did on the SAT I reasoning test or the ACT. Scores on the SAT II subject tests were in most cases less closely correlated than SAT I or ACT scores with students’ socioeconomic status. 13 Interestingly, the elective SAT II subject test had the lowest correlation of any exam with students’ socioeconomic status, while remaining a relatively strong indicator of their performance at the University of California (Geiser, 2002). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 740-750). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### SAT II and AP Tests Useful in Admissions

#### SAT II and AP tests have predictive validity

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The University of California had required applicants to take both the SAT I and a battery of achievement tests since 1968, and thus had an extensive database to evaluate that claim. Our data showed that the SAT I reasoning test was consistently inferior to the SAT II subject tests in predicting student performance, although the difference was small and there was substantial overlap between the tests. It was not the size of the difference but the consistency of the pattern that was most striking. The subject tests— particularly the writing exam— held a predictive advantage over the SAT I reasoning test at all UC campuses and within every academic discipline (Geiser, 2002). 5 And in later studies we found that the AP exams, which require the greatest depth of subject knowledge, exhibited an even greater predictive advantage (Geiser & Santelices, 2006). Mastery of curriculum content, it turns out, is important after all

### ACT Plausible Standardized Test Alternative

#### ACT less coachable and students can’t rely on testing techniques to do well

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Reflecting Lindquist’s philosophy, the ACT from the beginning has been tied more closely than the SAT to high school curricula. The earliest forms of the test grew out of the Iowa Tests of Educational Development and included four sections— English, mathematics, social studies reading, and natural sciences reading— reflecting Iowa’s high school curriculum. As the ACT grew into a national test, its content came to be based on national curriculum surveys as well as analysis of state standards for K– 12 instruction. In 1989 the test underwent a major revision and the current four subject areas were introduced (English, mathematics, reading, and science), and in 2005 the ACT added an optional writing exam in response, in part, to a request from the University of California. The ACT exhibits many of the characteristics that one would expect of an achievement test. It is developed from curriculum surveys. It appears less coachable than the SAT, and the consensus among the test prep services is that the ACT places less of a premium on test-taking skills and more on content mastery. The ACT also has a useful diagnostic component to assist students as early as the eighth grade to get on and stay on track for college— another function that Lindquist believed an admissions test should perform (ACT, 2009b). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 662-664). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### SAT II subject tests are predictors of college admissions success

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

#### Until the SAT II Writing exam was discontinued and became part of the New SAT in 2005, the University of California had for many years required three subject tests for admission to the UC system: SAT Writing, SAT II Mathematics, and a third SAT II subject test of the student’s choosing. 11 The elective test requirement was established to give students an opportunity to demonstrate particular subjects in which they excel and to assist them in gaining admission to particular majors. Students can also elect to submit AP exam scores, which, though not required, are considered in admission to individual UC campuses. 12 The idea that students should be able to choose the tests they take for admission may seem anomalous to those accustomed to viewing the SAT or ACT as national “yardsticks” for measuring readiness for college. But the real anomaly may be the idea that all students should take one test or that one test is suitable for all students. Our research showed that a selection of three SAT II subject tests— including one selected by students— predicted college performance better than either of the generic national assessments, although scores on all of the tests tended to be correlated and the predictive differences were relatively small. Of the individual SAT II exams, the elective SAT II subject test proved a relatively strong predictor, ranking just behind the SAT II Writing test (Geiser, 2002; Geiser & Santelices, 2007). The AP exams proved even better predictors. Although mere participation in AP classes bore no relation to performance in college, students who took and scored well on the AP exams tended to be very successful: AP exam scores were second only to high school grades in predicting student performance at the University of California (Geiser & Santelices, 2006). Our findings in California on the superiority of achievement tests, and especially the AP exams, have been confirmed by Bowen et al.’ s (2009) recent national study of college completion. Based on a large sample of students at public colleges and universities, Bowen and his colleagues found that AP exam scores were a far better incremental predictor of graduation rates than were scores on the regular SAT/ ACT and, as in the case of the SAT IIs, including this achievement test variable in the regression equation entirely removed any positive relationship between the SAT/ ACT scores and graduation rates. It is also important to emphasize that achievement tests are better predictors than SAT scores for all students, including minority students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (pp. 130– 131). In the national admissions community there is growing awareness of the value of subject tests. NACAC (2008) has recently called on colleges and universities to reexamine their emphasis on the SAT and ACT and to expand use of subject tests in admissions. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 717-726). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition. SAT subject tests aligned with curriculum

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The SAT Subject Tests, on the other hand, are not tied as directly to particular instructional approaches or curricula but are designed to assess a core of knowledge common to all curricula in a given subject area: “Each Subject Test is broad enough in scope to be accessible to students from a variety of academic backgrounds, but specific enough to be useful to colleges as a measure of a student’s expertise in that subject” (College Board, 2009b). This enhances their accessibility for use in admissions, but at a cost. The SAT Subject Tests are less curriculum intensive than the AP exams, and perhaps for that reason, they are also somewhat less effective in predicting student success in college (Geiser & Santelices, 2006). Without question, the SAT Subject Tests and AP exams have the strongest curricular foundations of any college entrance tests now available, and more colleges and universities should find them attractive for that reason. But both fall short of being fully realized achievement tests. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 762-766). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### AP & IB Tests

#### AP & IB tests are more reliable predictors and encourage reforms at the high school level

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

NACAC’s commission on testing, which wrote the 2008 report, included many high-profile admissions officials and was chaired by William Fitzsimmons, Dean of Admissions at Harvard. The report is unusually thoughtful and is worth quoting at some length: There are tests that, at many institutions, are both predictive of first-year and overall grades in college and more closely linked to the high school curriculum, including the College Board’s AP exams and Subject Tests as well as the International Baccalaureate examinations. What these tests have in common is that they are— to a much greater extent than the SAT and ACT— achievement tests, which measure content covered in high school courses; that there is currently very little expensive private test preparation associated with them, partly because high school class curricula are meant to prepare students for them; and that they are much less widely required by colleges than are the SAT and ACT…. By using the SAT and ACT as one of the most important admission tools, many institutions are gaining what may be a marginal ability to identify academic talent beyond that indicated by transcripts, recommendations, and achievement test scores. In contrast, the use of … College Board Subject Tests and AP tests, or International Baccalaureate exams, would create a powerful incentive for American high schools to improve their curricula and their teaching. Colleges would lose little or none of the information they need to make good choices about entering classes, while benefiting millions of American students who do not enroll in highly selective colleges and positively affecting teaching and learning in America’s schools. (NACAC, 2008, p. 44) Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 728-739). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Subject Tests Don’t Measure Skills

#### No, but subject material skills are highly correlated to SAT tests, making the additional information useless

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

Nothing important would be lost by dropping the SAT. The surprising empirical reality is that the SAT is redundant if students are required to take achievement tests. In theory, the SAT and the achievement tests measure different things. In the College Board’s own words from its website (www.collegeboard.com), “The SAT measures students’ verbal reasoning, critical reading, and skills,” while the achievement tests “show colleges their mastery of specific subjects.” In practice, SAT and achievement test scores are so highly correlated that SAT scores tell the admissions office little that it does not learn from the achievement test scores alone.

The pivotal analysis was released in 2001 by the University of California (UC), which requires all applicants to take both the SAT and achievement tests (three of them at the time the data were gathered: reading, mathematics, and a third of the student’s choosing). Using a database of 77,893 students who applied to UC from 1996 to 1999, Geiser and Studley (2004) analyzed the relationship among high school grades, SAT scores, achievement test scores, and freshman grades in college. Achievement tests did slightly better than the SAT in predicting freshman grades. High school grade-point average (GPA), SAT scores, and achievement test scores were entered into a statistical equation to predict the GPA that applicants achieved during their freshman year in college. The researchers found that achievement tests and high school GPA each had about the same independent role— that is, each factor was, by itself, an equally accurate predictor of how a student will do as a college freshman. But the SAT’s independent role in predicting freshman GPA turned out to be so small that knowing the SAT score added next to nothing to an admissions officer’s ability to forecast how an applicant will do in college— the reason to give the test in the first place. In technical terms, adding the SAT to the other two elements added just one-tenth of a percentage point to the percentage of variance in freshman grades explained by high school GPA and the achievement tests.

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### A2: Wealthy Can Afford Test Prep

#### Training has a marginal impact on SAT scores

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

If you’re rich, the critics say, you can raise your children in an environment where they will naturally acquire the information the SAT tests. If you’re rich, you can enroll your children in Kaplan, or Princeton Review, or even get private tutors to coach your kids in the tricks of test-taking, and thereby increase their SAT scores by a couple of hundred points. If you’re rich, you can shop around for a diagnostician who will classify your child as learning disabled and therefore eligible to take the SAT without time limits. Combine these edges, and it comes down to this: if you’re rich, you can buy your kids a high SAT score. Almost every parent with whom I discuss the SAT believes these charges. In fact, the claims range from simply false, in the case of cultural bias, to not-nearly-as-true-as-you-think, in the case of the others. Take coaching as an example, since it seems to be so universally accepted by parents and has been studied so extensively. From 1981 to 1990, three separate analyses of all the prior studies were published in peer-reviewed journals (Becker, 1990; DerSimonian & Laird, 1983; Messick & Jungeblut, 1981). They found a coaching effect of 9– 25 points on the SAT Verbal and of 15– 25 points on the SAT Math. Briggs (2004), using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, found effects of 3– 20 points for the SAT Verbal and 10– 28 points for the SAT Math. Powers and Rock (1999), using a nationally representative sample of students who took the SAT after its revisions in the mid-1990s, found an average coaching effect of 6– 12 points on the SAT Verbal and 13– 18 points on the SAT Math. Many studies tell nearly identical stories. On average, coaching raises scores by no more than a few dozen points, enough to sway college admissions in exceedingly few cases. The scholarly literature on this topic is not a two-sided debate. No study published in a peer-reviewed journal shows average gains approaching the fabled 100-point and 200-point jumps reported anecdotally. I asked two major test preparation companies, Kaplan and Princeton Review, for such evidence. Kaplan replied that it chooses not to release data for proprietary reasons.

But the coaching business is booming, with affluent parents being the best customers. If the payoff is really so small, why has the market judged coaching to be so successful? The answer is that parents are focused on seeing a high SAT score, not on thinking about what that SAT score might have been if they did nothing. Most obviously, parents who pay for expensive coaching courses ignore the role of self-selection: the students who seem to profit from a coaching course tend to be those who, if the course had not been available, would have worked hard on their own to prepare for the test. Then parents confuse the effects of coaching with the effect of the basic preparation that students can do on their own. No student should walk into the SAT cold. It makes sense for students to practice some sample items, easily available from school guidance offices and online, and to review their algebra textbook if it has been a few years since they have taken algebra. But once a few hours have been spent on these routine steps, most of the juice has been squeezed out of preparation for the SAT. Combine self-selection artifacts with the role of basic preparation, and you have the reason that independent studies using control groups show such small average gains from formal coaching. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1633-1641). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

## Required Standardized Admissions Tests Bad

### SAT Is a Standardized Test

#### The SAT is a standardized test

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

This book strives to inspire a general rethinking of college admissions. The particular impetus for this work, however, comes from a sense that our society allows too much weight to be placed on standardized, fill-in-the-blank college admissions tests. (For now, consideration of K– 12 testing is left to others.) High-stakes standardized college admissions tests have a gigantic and mostly negative impact on American life. Currently, approximately 3 million youths graduate each year from high school, 2 million attend college, more than 1.5 million take the SAT, and (with much overlap) more than 1.5 million take the ACT. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 132-137). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Story of David and Michael

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

Michael and David grew up in the same suburban town just outside of Washington, DC, but they were born into very different family circumstances, which dramatically affected their lives. Michael is a white student who comes from a privileged background. He attended a private school starting in the first grade and continuing through high school. Michael’s parents owned a large home in an upscale neighborhood and they spent their summers in Eastern Shore, Maryland. Michael lived with both of his parents, and his mother stayed home to care for him and his two younger sisters. While he was a strong “B” student, there were certainly times that Michael struggled academically, but he had the opportunity to meet with teachers and private tutors on a regular basis in order to better understand the material.

When applying for college, Michael had the privilege of working directly with a college counselor in his high school. While Michael averaged a 3.7 GPA, his SAT score of 1050 was 200 points less than the school average. Because a majority of colleges and universities place a significant emphasis on standardized test scores, Michael’s counselor recommended that he meet with a specialized SAT tutor who would help him recognize specific types of questions and improve his score. Michael’s mother also hired an independent college counselor who was well respected in the area. The independent counselor made sure that Michael understood the difference in application types and edited any required essays. The counselor selected schools for Michael to apply to based on historical data related to his grade-point-average (GPA), test scores, and institutional selectivity. After working with his tutor, Michael was able to increase his SAT scores by over 200 points, making him extremely competitive at most of the institutions that he was interested in.

David, an African-American student, lived only eight miles from Michael but the two never crossed paths. David never met his father, and his mother passed away when he was four years old. His grandmother cared for him and his three younger siblings despite earning a minimal salary working at a local grocery store. In high school, David attended the local public school, which hosted approximately two thousand students. He worked extremely hard throughout high school, maintaining a strong 3.3 (B) GPA and dreamed of attending Georgetown University upon his graduation. To help his family, David worked nearly thirty hours a week earning minimum wage at a fast food restaurant. This schedule minimized David’s ability to participate in extra-curricular activities. In September of his senior year, David met with his school guidance counselor, who worked with about five hundred other students. His counselor recommended that David take the SAT. While David had heard of the SAT exam, he was unclear as to how to even register to take the test. After registering, David took the SAT test but had never experienced anything quite like it. He finished with a disappointing score. His combined Critical Reading and Math score was 900, which ranked him in the bottom 25 percent of students who took the test nationally.

David met with his school counselor again in December to inquire about the college application process. David was unaware that most application deadlines were on January 15th, which was rapidly approaching. Since it was late in the process, and because David’s SAT scores were so low, his counselor recommended that he apply to the local state school. David elected not to apply to Georgetown, or any of the other more prestigious institutions that he once considered, because even applying to schools was a significant financial burden, due to the required application fees. In April, David found out that he was not admitted to the state institution. Despite having a GPA in the top half of his extremely large high school, David’s low SAT scores left him without a four-year institution to attend in the fall.

The fictional stories depicted here are not unusual, as students from low socioeconomic, or traditionally non-white backgrounds are placed at a significant disadvantage throughout the college application process. Although race and socio-economic status are not one in the same, there is an intersecting relationship between race and class which cannot be ignored. Non-White students are proportionally significantly more likely to be born into poverty than White students.

The literature illustrates a cultural partiality toward non-diverse students in standardized testing. An unbalanced dependence on SAT scores in the admission process has created an increasing number of criticisms of valuation procedures (Syverson, 2007). Arguments have been made for and against standardized testing in the admission process, but mounting evidence indicates that this reliance upon standardized test scores produces an admitted student profile with significant race and class bias (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009).

#### SAT not a predictor of success in the UC system

John Aubrey Douglas, 2013, Douglas is Fellow in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities (2007). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

In 2001, University of California President Richard Atkinson, a psychometrician, asked why California’s premier multi-campus research university should require the SAT for freshman admissions. The SAT dominates the market, and its purveyor— the Educational Testing Service (ETS)— claims that it is an important predictor of a student’s success in America’s colleges and universities. That’s what it’s all about, right? But a university study initiated by Atkinson provided contradictory evidence. At least within the University of California (UC)— with some 150,000 undergraduates in 2001 scattered among nine undergraduate campuses— the SAT was not a very good predictor of performance. Grades in high school, along with some evaluation of a student’s socioeconomic circumstance and achievements in that environment, proved to be a better predictor. Simply put, among an already relatively select group of students, evidence of a student’s drive to learn and to be both academically and civically engaged in the years leading up to university enrollment is the best indicator of a student’s future academic achievement at a place like Berkeley or UCLA— among the most selective institutions in the United States. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1120-1123). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### SAT Test Background

#### SAT is the most common standardized test for college admissions

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

The final component to complete the college application is the submission of standardized test scores. The most common way students have submitted test scores has been through the SAT.

#### SAT test background

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

The SAT has been, and remains today, a cornerstone in the college admission process. The test was introduced in 1926, and by 1970 it was used by virtually all major public and private four-year institutions. The test is taken by most college-bound high school students in both their junior and senior years, and is often included (and required) as a component of a student’s college application. In its original form (which this paper explores) the test was broken into two sections: “Math” and “Verbal.” Each section awards students between 200 and 800 points, and these scores are combined to provide the student with a final test score on a 1600 point scale. The test is made up of multiple choice questions related to sentence completion, passage-based reading, algebra, geometry and data analysis (College Board, 2012).

#### SAT history

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

The original idea behind the SAT was to enhance the abilities of colleges and universities to assess, evaluate and compare the academic achievements of students from differing educational backgrounds and experiences. The “SAT movement” was spearheaded by James Conant, former president of both Harvard University and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Conant believed that if he could replace the privileged and entitled student bodies of the 1930’s by creating a society that would select its leaders based on achievement, therefore promoting the idea of a “meritocracy,” it would replace the current student body with more intellectually gifted students. The new “meritocracy” would be based on the SAT exam which Harvard initially utilized as a means of awarding merit-based academic scholarships to applicants who completed and excelled on the exam (Lemann, 1999).

Conant was extremely innovative in the practices he put into place during the 1930’s, as he created what he called “Jefferson’s ideal,” admitting students based strictly on merit. Harvard was the first of the elite schools to make a true effort to diversify (regionally and socio-economically) their campus culture based on the student merit, not economic status. Conant created a scholarship program for students who took the initial version of the SAT and scored the highest. Previously, scholarships had been viewed as a “badge of poverty,” but Conant’s new merit-based scholarships were a sign of intelligence and prestige. After three years of awarding scholarships, the programs saw an increase in geographic diversity and the educational quality of Harvard’s students. This allowed Conant to convince the other Ivy League schools to follow his lead and institute the testing policy

Over the next several decades, Henry Chauncey, who was the founder of the Educational Testing Service, evolved Conant’s SAT-based scholarship program and convinced colleges and universities to use the SAT as an admissions criterion. While Conant and Chauncey changed the pool of applicants who were eligible for admission to schools and made a more democratic nation, Lemann (1999) believes it inevitably gave students the same mindset as had been created previously, which was to gain more power and create separation within socio-economic class, not help the rest of the country (p. 64).

Due to the implementation of the GI Bill2, the increased population due to the “baby boomers,” and the women’s rights movement, the nation saw a massive increase in interest and attendance at institutes of higher learning throughout the 1950s and 1960s. As interest in higher education grew, so did the influence of the SAT upon academic selections by admissions committees. The SAT provided a way for colleges and universities to efficiently review the increasing number of applicants from diverse geographic territories. However there were differing opinions about the costs and benefits of such an approach. In the eyes of its supporters, the exam provided an “equal playing field” that allowed colleges and universities to better evaluate and compare their applicants. By 1970, the SAT had solidified itself as one of the primary evaluative measurements of intellectual ability in college admissions.

As application pools began to see significant increases in overall numbers, the reliance on the SAT became more prominent. The number of institutions who indicated that they placed “considerable importance” on admission test scores rose from 46% in 1993 to 60% in 2006 (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2008). Institutions who enroll ten thousand students or more, which are primarily public institutions, were the most likely to place considerable emphasis on standardize testing (81%). The relationship between SAT scores and socio-economic status means the state institutions, which are cost effective options for low-income families, may not be a possibility because of the emphasis placed on standardized testing.

### “Test Optional” Background

#### Many “test optional” universities

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

“Test-optional” (also referred to as score-optional) admission was originally pioneered by Bowdoin College in 1969 and Bates College in 1984. The policy allows students to apply and be admitted to the university without the inclusion of standardized test scores. Once enrolled, statistics show nearly identical Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and graduation rates from students who did submit their test scores as students who did not submit test scores (Epstein, 2009). Encouraged by the successes of pioneering schools of the test-optional policy, many highly selective institutions across the country began instituting their own variations of the policy (Epstein, 2009). There are currently hundreds of colleges and universities across the country that offer a test-optional admission policy, more than 30 of which are ranked by US News and World Report as top the 100 Liberal Arts Colleges within the United States. Some of test-optional schools include Wake Forest University, Middlebury College, Brandeis University, New York University, University of Texas at Austin and College of the Holy Cross, to name a few.

### SAT Has a Substantial SES Bias

#### SAT structurally biased against lower SES students

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

Critics of the test argue that the SAT is not the best indication of what a students’ success level will be once they get to college, and that it does not effectively place students on a fair and equal playing field. Critics have cited SAT test questions, which they believe are biased against low-income students, particularly those who speak English as a second language (Pringle, 2003). These concerns, coupled with the opportunities for students (often white, middle- and upper-class students) to be “coached” through the SAT exam, are perceived as unfair advantages for certain students who take the test. The validity of intelligence testing must be questioned when evaluating students with different life experiences. Topics and terms which are familiar to students in one culture may not be similar to students in another. Barnett and Williams (2011) speak to the validity of testing: Even if an intelligence test is capable of making meaningful distinctions between individuals who have similar life experiences it may not have the same meaning when comparing individuals with different life experiences (p. 669).

In many cases, the SAT can act as an impartial measure of a student’s ability, but the problem has always been that the foundation of the SAT is unjust to select groups of people because of their upbringing and/or socio-economic background. According to Avery and Hoxby (2012), just 17 percent of high-achieving students (top 10% of SAT scorers) are from families estimated to be in the bottom quartile of the income distribution (p.33). For those people who are concerned with racial and socio-economic equity and access to higher education, there is a fear that the emphasis on standardized testing in the admission process creates opportunity for students who are disproportionately from higher-classes and primarily white or Asian (Shanley, 2007).

#### Strong correlation between SAT scores and income

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

While the SAT was originally created to increase diversity and review applicants fairly, Table 1 shows that there is a direct relationship between family income and average SAT scores. As shown in the chart, students who come from families with an income of 40,000 dollars or less average less than 480 points on all three sections of the SAT. Meanwhile students who come from families which make more than 200,000 dollars per year, average nearly 560 points or higher in all three sections of the SAT. This discrepancy is a clear indicator of the socio-economic biases within the SAT exam. In order to evaluate the intelligence of students from different cultures, intelligence must be measured using the same level of difficulty for everyone. Intelligence testing—like the SAT, which has a direct relationship to socio-economic status and utilizes questions that are culturally biased—is not an equal measure of intelligence for all students (Barnett, 2011).

#### SAT test is an indicator of SES and limits college access for underrepresented classes

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

The SAT was originally intended to promote access to colleges and universities across the country, but it has actually alienated students based on cultural biases and socio-economic class. The SAT was originally created by the combined work of Harvard president James Conant and the Educational Testing Services (ETS) and was designed to create equity while evaluating individual applicants from across the country (Lemann, 1999).The perceived value of the SAT, from the perspective of college admissions professionals, is that the test results allow colleges to compare, and better assess, the academic potential of students from different parts of the county, school systems, and academic institutions. In actuality, the test has become an indicator of socio-economic status and has had a limiting effect on college access for underrepresented populations1.

#### SAT scores less valuable for admissions scores than transcripts and they reinforce inequality

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

All of this is done for tests (SAT and ACT) that are less valuable than the high school transcript for an admissions officer’s ability to estimate how well a youth will do in college. Rather than leveling the playing field, these tests reinforce social disparities: women score lower than men, but earn higher college grades; there is a linear relation between family income and test score that does not exist for high school grades; and the racial disparities in test scores are a constant source of controversy.

#### White and affluent students perform best on the SAT

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

More disturbing than the SAT’s small statistical contribution is its significant social cost. If we employ SAT scores to set the limits of our qualified applicant pool, rather than rely on HSGPA, we end up selecting from candidates who are overwhelmingly white and affluent. The social case against the SAT is that racial and socioeconomic status disparities are transmitted by the test. As the NACAC report on admissions states, “test scores appear to calcify differences based on class, race/ ethnicity, and parental educational attainment” (NACAC, 2008, p. 11). Many researchers attribute the test’s fossilizing effects to its correlation with family socioeconomic status. The SAT appears to be a more reliable proxy for privilege than for college performance. As noted in a 2007 report from Berkeley’s Center for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE), SAT I Verbal and Math scores exhibit a strong, positive relationship with measures of socioeconomic status (SES) such as family income, parents’ education and the academic ranking of a student’s high school, whereas HSGPA is only weakly associated with such measures. As a result, standardized admissions tests tend to have greater adverse impact than HSGPA on underrepresented minority students, who come disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds. (Geiser & Santelices 2007, p. 2) SAT-sensitive admissions reduce all types of social diversity. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 251-256). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Wealthy kids can afford SAT prep

John Aubrey Douglas, 2013, Douglas is Fellow in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities (2007). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

Opponents of the widespread use of the SAT have long claimed that the SAT promotes needless socioeconomic stratification. The test favors students from upper income families and communities, in part because they can afford a growing range of expensive commercially available test preparation courses and counseling. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1123-1125). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Affluence ties to high scores

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

It makes no difference, however, that the charges about coaching are wrong, just as it makes no difference that the whole idea that rich parents can buy their children high SAT scores is wrong. One part of the indictment is true, and that one part overrides everything else: the children of the affluent and well educated really do get most of the top scores. For example, who gets the coveted scores of 700 and higher, putting them in the top half-dozen percentiles of SAT test-takers? Extrapolating from the 2006 data on means and standard deviations reported by the College Board (2006, Table 11), about half of the 700 + scores went to students from families making more than $ 100,000 per year. But the truly consequential statistics are these: approximately 90% of the students with 700 + scores had at least one parent with a college degree; over half had a parent with a graduate degree. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1644-1647). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### SAT Has a Cultural Bias

#### SAT questions culturally biased

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

Part of the reason why minority students struggle with the SAT exam is because its questions have, and continue to be, inherently lenient to, and focused upon, the life experiences of middle and upper class students (who tend to be traditionally white), as opposed to the life and academic experiences of lower-income students (including those for whom English may be a second language). Robert Schaeffer, the Director of Center of Public Education, cited several analogy questions from over the years which can be

considered culturally biased, including this former SAT question:

RUNNER: MARATHON:

A) envoy: embassy

B) martyr: massacre

C) oarsman: regatta

D) referee: tournament

E) horse: stable

The answer is C, which Schaeffer describes as “incredibly culturally centered. You don’t see a regatta in center-city L.A., you don’t see it in Appalachia, you don’t see it in New Mexico” (as cited in Pringle, 2003, p. 2). This is one example of how the SAT uses vocabulary and experiences which a low-income minority student from an inner-city school would not likely encounter. Critics have asserted, and much of the public still believes, that the SAT is mainly a test of upper-middle-class socialization (Grissmer, 2000).

#### Cultural bias undermines it as an intelligence test

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

With the growth of interest in college from non-white and international students, intelligence testing becomes increasingly more difficult. In order to evaluate the intelligence of students from different cultures, intelligence must be measured using the same difficulty for everyone. Intelligence testing, like the SAT, which has a direct relationship to socio-economic status and utilizes questions that are culturally biased, is not an equal measure of intelligence for all students. The validity of intelligence testing must be questioned when evaluating students with different life experiences.

### Racial Bias

#### African American and Indian minorities are more likely to live in poverty

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

It is important to note, that race and socio-economic status cannot be used interchangeably. In fact, the majority of low income Americans are White. The research will refer to both aspects of diversity with the understanding that race has a direct relationship to socio-economic status, African American students are three times more likely to live in poverty than White students. In addition, American Indian and/or Alaska Native, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian families are all more likely than White Americans to live in poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

### SAT Tests a Limited Set of Skills

#### SAT only tests one form of intelligence

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

It says something very profound about the role of the SAT today if Charles Murray has abandoned it. Part II begins by rejecting the notion that underpins the SAT (explicitly in the past, implicitly at present): that there is only one type of intelligence. Theories of multiple intelligences, famously associated with the names of Howard Gardner and Robert J. Sternberg, argue in favor of colleges selecting for a diversity of intelligences beyond the analytic ability tapped by tests like the SAT. When DePaul University went test-optional in 2011, becoming then the largest private university in the United States to do so, it knew that high school grades best predicted college grades, and that SAT/ ACT scores transmitted social disparities, but it was also impressed by the multiple-intelligence alternative of “noncognitive assessment.” As the Chronicle of Higher Education reported, “DePaul officials began investigating noncognitive assessments several years ago. In 2008 the university added four short essay questions to its freshman application. Those questions were based on the research of William E. Sedlacek, a professor emeritus of education at the University of Maryland at College Park and author of Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education [2004]” (Hoover, 2011). Admissions practices, such as DePaul used, that are sensitive to multiple intelligences are urged by authors in this book.

### A2: Foreign Students Provide Diversity

#### Foreign students don’t bring socioeconomic diversity

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

International students have also become a major focus of enrollment offices. In the 2012-13 academic year a record, 819,644 foreign students studied in the United States. This is a 7.2% increase from the previous year, according to an annual report released by the Institute of International Education, a nonprofit organization (2013). These students are often required to submit bank statements in order to be considered for admission. These statements are included in their application material to demonstrate the capabilities to afford tuition, room and board at United States institutions. These students certainly bring a level of diversity to college campuses but in no way is that diversity related in socio economic status.

### A2: No SAT Requirement Lowers Quality of the Incoming Class

#### No difference in graduation rates between those who submit test scores and those who do not

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

The increased national growth of the test-optional policy is a relatively new enrollment practice. Over the past decade, higher education has seen a significant increase in interest of diverse constituents. Originally, Bates College adopted the test optional policy in hopes of increasing their total application numbers, and it worked.

Applications rose from 2,500 in 1984 to just fewer than 3,500 in 1989. William Hiss, who was the dean of admission during that period, said, “If I had had to choose making tests optional and losing 1,000 applications it would have been tough. But when you gain 1,000 applications? There's no downside.” Minority applications also increased as nearly half of Bates’s Black and Hispanic applicants applied without submitting test scores. Once enrolled, statistics showed nearly identical GPA and graduation rates from students who did submit their test scores as students who did not submit test scores (Epstein,

2009).

#### Those admitted under test optional succeed in universities

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

Colleges and Universities have promoted the idea of diversity within their institutions but are reluctant to make any substantial changes to their evaluation measures or the cultures of enrollment at each institution. By encouraging cultural diversity, schools will naturally accrue students from diverse backgrounds. As the diversity of applicants increases, it is the responsibility of each institution to evaluate the intelligence of students individually. In order to uniquely evaluate each student, schools must take into account new areas of intelligence. The promotion of diversity would indicate that cultural intelligence may be a significant area of assessment for students. Schools must understand that each student is different and successful intelligence cannot be assumed the same for each student. While the SAT provides an efficient way to evaluate students, it is clearly evaluating isolated areas of intelligence that do not reflect the goals of cultural diversity for an evolving educational system.

Test-optional admission practices have proven to increase application and matriculation numbers of underrepresented students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The students who are admissible under the test-optional policy are capable of thriving within a collegiate setting.

### A2: Helps Kids Who Don’t Go to Elite Prep Schools

#### No longer true

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

For most high school students who want to attend an elite college, the SAT is more than a test. It is one of life’s landmarks. Waiting for the scores— one for Verbal, one for Math, and now one for Writing, with a possible 800 on each— is painfully suspenseful. The exact scores are commonly remembered forever after. So it has been for half a century. But events of recent years have challenged the SAT’s position. In 2001, Richard Atkinson (2001), president of the University of California, proposed dropping the SAT as a requirement for admission. More and more prestigious small colleges, such as Middlebury and Bennington, are making the SAT optional. The charge that the SAT is slanted in favor of privileged students—“ a wealth test,” as Harvard law professor Lani Guinier calls it— has been ubiquitous (Zwick, 2004). I have watched the attacks on the SAT with dismay. Back in 1961, the test helped get me into Harvard from a small Iowa town by giving me a way to show that I could compete with applicants from Exeter and Andover. Ever since, I have seen the SAT as the friend of the little guy, just as James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard, said it would be when he urged the SAT upon the nation in the 1940s. Conant’s cause was as unambiguously liberal in the 1940s as income redistribution is today. Then, America’s elite colleges drew most of their students from a small set of elite secondary schools, concentrated in the northeastern United States, to which America’s wealthy sent their children. The mission of the SAT was to identify intellectual talent regardless of race, color, creed, money, or geography, and give that talent a chance to blossom. Students from small towns and from poor neighborhoods in big cities were supposed to benefit— as I thought I did, and as many others think they did. But data trump gratitude. The evidence has become overwhelming that the SAT no longer serves a democratizing purpose. Worse, events have conspired to make the SAT a negative force in American life. And so I find myself arguing that the SAT should be abolished. Not just deemphasized, but no longer administered. Nothing important would be lost by so doing. Much would be gained. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1490-1498). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Use ACT/ACT Good

#### ACT has many weaknesses

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Yet the ACT still falls short of being a true achievement test in several ways. Like the SAT, the ACT remains a norm-referenced test and is used by colleges and universities primarily to compare students against one another rather than to assess curriculum mastery. The ACT is scored in a manner that produces almost the same bell curve distribution as the SAT. It is true that the ACT also provides standards-based interpretations indicating the knowledge and skills that students at different score levels generally can be expected to have learned (ACT, 2009a). But those interpretations are only approximations and do not necessarily identify what an examinee actually knows. It is difficult to reconcile the ACT’s norm-referenced scoring with the idea of a criterion-referenced assessment or to understand how one test could serve both functions equally. The ACT lacks the depth of subject matter coverage that one finds in other achievement tests such as the SAT Subject Tests or AP exams. The ACT science section, for example, is intended to cover high school biology, chemistry, physics, and earth/ space science. But the actual test requires little knowledge in any of these disciplines, and a student who is adept at reading charts and tables quickly to identify patterns and trends can do well on this section— section— unlike the SAT Subject Tests or AP exams in the sciences, which require intensive subject matter knowledge. In a curious twist, the ACT and SAT appear to have converged over time. Whereas the SAT has shed many of its trickier and more esoteric item types, such as verbal analogies and quantitative comparisons, the ACT has become more SAT-like in some ways, such as the premium it places on students’ time management skills. It is not surprising that almost all U.S. colleges and universities now accept both tests and treat ACT and SAT scores interchangeably. Finally, another fundamental problem for the ACT— or for any test that aspires to serve as the nation’s achievement test— is the absence of national curriculum standards in the United States. The ACT has tried to overcome this problem through its curriculum surveys, but the “average” curriculum does not necessarily reflect what students are expected to learn in any given state, district, or school. The lack of direct alignment between curriculum and assessment has led the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC, 2008) to criticize the practice followed by some states, such as Colorado, Illinois, and Michigan, of requiring all K– 12 students to take the ACT, whether or not they plan on attending college, and using the results as a measure of student achievement in the schools. This practice runs counter to the American Educational Research Association’s guidelines on testing: “Admission tests, whether they are intended to measure achievement or ability, are not directly linked to a particular instructional curriculum and, therefore, are not appropriate for detecting changes in middle school or high school performance” (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999, p. 143). Of course, using the ACT to assess achievement in high school is not the same as using it to assess readiness for college. But the same underlying problem— the loose alignment between curriculum and assessment— is evident in both contexts. It may be that no one test, however well designed, can ever be entirely satisfactory in a country with a strong tradition of federalism and local control over the schools. Developing an effective and robust single national achievement test may be impossible in the absence of a national curriculum. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 684-690). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Grades are a better predictor than the SAT II and the ACT

John Aubrey Douglas, 2013, Douglas is Fellow in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities (2007). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

A follow-up study by the University of California also demonstrated that subject tests, like the ACT, are only marginally better than the SAT. That means that subject-based tests, including a second array of tests marketed by ETS as the SAT II, are only philosophically better as an admissions requirement for the premier public university system in the United States. High school grades remain the best single measure of demonstrated academic achievement— a pretty good philosophical trump card. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1131-1133). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Use SAT Subject Tests

#### Subject tests not a statistically significant predictor

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Our ability to predict student performance in college on the basis of factors known at the point of admission remains relatively limited. After decades of predictive-validity studies, our best prediction models (using not only test scores but high school grades and other academic and socioeconomic factors) still account for only about 25– 30% of the variance in outcome measures such as college GPA. This means that some 70– 75% of the variance is unexplained. That should not be surprising in view of the many other factors that affect student performance after admission, such as social support, financial aid, and academic engagement in college. But it also means that the error bands around our predictions are quite broad. Using test scores as a tiebreaker to choose between applicants who are otherwise equally qualified, as is sometimes done, is not necessarily a reliable guide, especially where score differences are small. Moreover, there is little difference among the major national tests in their ability to predict student performance in college. Although the New SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, and AP exams differ in design, content, and other respects, they tend to be highly correlated and thus largely interchangeable with respect to prediction. It is true that subject-specific tests (in particular the AP exams) do have a statistically significant predictive advantage (Bowen et al., 2009; Geiser & Santelices, 2006), but the statistical difference by itself is too small to be of practical significance or to dictate adoption of one test over another. The argument for achievement tests is not so much that they are better predictors than other kinds of tests but that they are no worse: “The benefits of achievement tests for college admissions— greater clarity in admissions standards, closer linkage to the high-school curriculum— can be realized without any sacrifice in the capacity to predict success in college” (Geiser, 2002, p. 25). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 861-866). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Use K-12 Standardized Tests

#### K-12 standards don’t match admissions standards for elite universities

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

California’s experience illustrates a more general problem likely to confront efforts to develop standards-based assessments that bridge the institutional divide between state university and K– 12 school systems. Standards for what is expected of entering freshmen at selective colleges and universities are different and usually much more rigorous than K– 12 curriculum standards. They overlap, to be sure, but they are not the same, and institutional conflicts over standards and testing are probably inevitable for this reason. College and university faculty are right to be skeptical about using K– 12 tests in admissions if it means relinquishing control over entrance standards. And it is understandable that secondary school educators are concerned that, in seeking to adapt and modify K– 12 tests for use in admissions, colleges and universities may exert undue influence over curriculum standards for the schools. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 806-811). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Test Optional Boosts Diversity

#### Test optional policies improve diversity

James Moynihan, MA, Spring, 2014, MA Thesis Admitting Bias: A Review of the Test-Optional Admission Policy at George Mason University, <http://digilib.gmu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1920/8679/Moynihan_thesis_2014.pdf?sequence=1> DOA: 10-25-15

Espenshade and Chung (2005) have used predictive modeling to explore the racial and socio-economic diversity that SAT optional policies would have on college campuses. Their studies have found “unambiguously that increased racial and socioeconomic diversity can be achieved by switching to test-optional admission policies” (p. 20). Research shows that schools who implement test-optional admission policies see an average of 6.6% increase in overall applications, with black and Hispanic student applications growing by 30% (p.189). While the SAT theoretically should be the middle ground for all college-bound applicants, it has actually acted as a hindrance for thousands of prospective college students.

#### More than 850 universities have test optional admissions

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

In May 2008, Wake Forest University announced a new admissions policy, no longer requiring SAT/ ACT scores as part of the application process. With this change in policy, Wake Forest joined approximately 750 other four-year-degree-granting institutions that were test-optional. And those ranks have grown: as this book nears publication, approximately 850 institutions have gone test-optional. Wake Forest was singled out as the first highly ranked national university to go test-optional. News outlets ranging from the Charlotte Observer to the New York Times covered the change, including several positive editorials. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 151-154). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Eliminating SAT scores increases Black applications and enrolment

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

In the buzz over Wake Forest’s decision, the connection between testing and racial disparities in America was highlighted. According to The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, “Wake Forest presents the most serious threat so far to the future of the SAT…. University admissions officials say that one reason for dropping the SAT is to encourage more black and minority applicants. Blacks now make up 6 percent of the undergraduate student body” (“ Wake Forest Presents,” 2008, p. 9). The year after the new policy was announced, Wake Forest’s minority applications went up by 70%, and the first test-optional class (which enrolled in the fall of 2009) was 23% black and Hispanic, a big leap forward. For Wake Forest, as for many other colleges, there is an inverse relationship between the weight placed on high-stakes test scores and the diversity of an applicant pool and matriculating class. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 154-160). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### Grades Best Predictor of College Success

#### High school grades are the best predictor of academic success

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

The limitations of the SAT beyond its one-dimensional view of intelligence may also include racial, ethnic, and gender biases that are due to the mechanics of test design. Chapter 6, by Jay Rosner, Executive Director of the Princeton Review Foundation, explains how the test question selection process may penalize women, ethnic minorities, and racial minorities. The statistical case against the SAT (which also applies to the ACT) is that it does not significantly enhance the ability of admissions staff to predict the academic potential of applicants. Insofar as the SAT is a measure of analytic ability, it contributes little beyond what we already know from high school about cognitive performance. Lest there be any confusion about this, one should keep in mind that high school grade-point average (HSGPA) has always been the best single academic variable predicting college grades— that point has been repeatedly admitted even by the SAT’s sponsor, the College Board (Kobrin, Patterson, Shaw, Mattern, & Barbuti, 2008). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 228-230). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### High school grades are better predictors than newly designed tests

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

New in-depth studies described in Chapters 7– 9 by authors from Wake Forest University, the University of Georgia, and Johns Hopkins University explore the relative merits of the academic and demographic data available in an applicant’s file as predictors of college grades. We accept limited terms of debate about the SAT— the metric of first-year college grades— because this is the measure used by the ETS and the College Board to justify their test (Kobrin et al., 2008). The independent case studies presented here— from three types of selective institutions (liberal arts college, flagship public university, private research university)— offer similar findings that are dramatically different from the claims made by the testing industry. These studies show that the New SAT adds 1– 4 percentage points to a regression model’s ability to predict grades— and that is not a very impressive justification for the troubles and expenses endured by millions of America’s test-taking families. Furthermore, there are important variations in the effectiveness of the test among types of institutions and types of students, but not in the effectiveness of high school grades. Test scores, for example, tell us less about how well a black youth will do at a public university than they do about how the same individual will perform at a private liberal arts college; but high school grades work equally well at both. These three case studies show that test scores are unreliable and inconstant predictors, whereas high school grades are dependable and uniform— and that is a complete reversal of the conventional wisdom offered by the testing industry. If regression models predicting college performance typically explain 20– 30% of what matters to one’s grade-point average, then clearly admissions remain more art than science. Our best models fail to capture 70– 80% of what predicts grades, and that leaves a lot of room for the discerning judgment of admissions staff. There is nothing that can replace human judgment based on a conscientious examination of each applicant’s file and, whenever possible, face-to-face interviews. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 240-246). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### High school grades are the most reliable predictor of college success

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

A first order of business is to put admissions tests in proper perspective. High school grades are the best indicator of student readiness for college, and standardized tests are useful primarily as a supplement to the high school record. High school grades are sometimes viewed as a less reliable indicator than standardized tests because grading standards differ across schools. Yet although grading standards do vary by school, grades still outperform standardized tests in predicting college outcomes: irrespective of the quality or type of school attended, cumulative grade point average (GPA) in academic subjects in high school has proved to be the best overall predictor of student performance in college. This finding has been confirmed in the great majority of “predictive-validity” studies conducted over the years, including studies conducted by the testing agencies themselves (see Burton & Ramist, 2001, and Morgan, 1989, for useful summaries of studies conducted since 1976). 1 Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 517-523). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### SAT scores more closely associated with students’ socioeconomic background than grades

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

However, correlations of this kind can be misleading because they mask the contribution of socioeconomic and other factors to the prediction. Family income and parents’ education, for example, are correlated with SAT scores and also with college outcomes, so much of the apparent predictive power of the SAT actually reflects the proxy effects of socioeconomic status. Berkeley economist Jesse Rothstein (2004) conservatively estimates that traditional validity studies that omit socioeconomic variables overstate the predictive power of the SAT by 150%. 2 High school grades, on the other hand, are less closely associated with students’ socioeconomic background and thus retain their predictive power even when controls for socioeconomic status are introduced, as shown in validity studies that employ more fully specified multivariate regression models. Such models generate standardized regression coefficients that allow one to compare the predictive weight of different admissions factors when all other factors are held constant. Using this analytical approach, the predictive advantage of high school grades over standardized tests is more evident (Geiser, 2002; Geiser & Santelices, 2007). 3 Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 528-537). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Grades better predictors of 4 year GPAs and college graduation rates

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

The predictive superiority of high school grades has also been obscured by the outcome measures typically employed in validity studies. Most studies have looked only at freshman grades in college; relatively few have examined longer term outcomes such as 4-year graduation rate or cumulative GPA in college. A large-scale study at the University of California (UC) that did track long-term long-term outcomes found that high school grades were decisively superior to standardized tests in predicting 4-year graduation rate and cumulative college GPA (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). The California findings have been confirmed in a recent national study of college completion by William Bowen and his colleagues, Crossing the Finish Line, based on a sample of students from a broad range of public colleges and universities: “High school grades are a far better predictor of both four-year and six-year graduation rates than are SAT/ ACT test scores— a central finding that holds within each of the six sets of public universities that we study” Why high school grades have a predictive advantage over standardized tests is not fully understood. It is undeniable that grading standards differ across high schools, yet standardized test scores are based on a single sitting of 3 or 4 hours, whereas high school GPA is based on repeated sampling of student performance over a period of years. In addition, college preparatory classes present many of the same academic challenges that students will face in college— term papers, labs, final exams— so it should not be surprising that prior performance in such activities would be predictive of later performance. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 545-549). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Getting Rid of SAT Shifts to Achievement Testing

#### That is good

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

Getting rid of the SAT will destroy the coaching industry as we know it. Coaching for the SAT is seen as the teaching of tricks and strategies— a species of cheating— not as supplementary education. The retooled coaching industry will focus on the achievement tests, but insofar as the offerings consist of cram courses for tests in topics such as U.S. history or chemistry, the taint will be reduced. A low-income student shut out of opportunity for an SAT coaching school has the sense of being shut out of mysteries. Being shut out of a cram course is less daunting. Students know that they can study for a history or chemistry exam on their own. A coaching industry that teaches content along with test-taking techniques will have the additional advantage of being much better pedagogically— at least the students who take the coaching courses will be spending some of their time learning history or chemistry. The substitution of achievement tests for the SAT will put a spotlight on the quality of the local high school’s curriculum. If achievement test scores are getting all of the parents’ attention in the college admissions process, the courses that prepare for those achievement tests will get more of their attention as well, and the pressure for those courses to improve will increase. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1687-1688). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: New (2005) SAT is Better

#### The new, 2005 SAT did not improve predictive power

Joseph Soares, 2013, Joseph A. Soares is a Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. His book The Power of Privilege: Yale and America’s Elite Colleges (2007) was instrumental in Wake Forest’s decision to go test-optional in admissions. An earlier book on universities in the United Kingdom, The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University (1999), won a national award from the American Sociological Association. For most of 2008, he was a member of the National Education Policy Group for Barack Obama’s campaign for U.S. President. Dr. Soares organized the national “Rethinking Admissions” conference held at Wake Forest University in April 2009. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of the card

Chapter 2 is an extensive essay on a century of experience with standardized tests in admissions by Richard Atkinson, former President of the University of California, and Saul Geiser, who is affiliated with the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. Atkinson and Geiser’s critique of the SAT in 2001 was a turning point in the national discussion of testing. California made the SAT a successful nationwide test in the late 1960s when it decided to require it, and in 2001 California threatened to pull the pillars out of the very testing edifice it helped to create by abandoning the SAT. California found high school grades and subject tests to best predict college performance, and to do so without as many disparities between social groups as are found with the SAT. In reaction, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) offered to create a new test that would address California’s concerns about fairness and predictive power, if only California would give it another chance. California accepted ETS’s proposal, which, like the second-marriage cliché on the triumph of hope over experience, brought sad results. The New SAT, which was released in 2005, has been widely judged a failure. Relative to the older SAT, it is longer and more expensive, it has no more predictive power, and it has higher test-score disparities between racial groups. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 195-198). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### New SAT does not add predictive power

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Nevertheless, as an admissions test, the New SAT still falls short in important respects. The New SAT has three sections: Writing, Mathematics, and a third called Critical Reading. Not surprisingly, given the University of California’s earlier findings, research by the College Board shows that writing is the most predictive of the three sections. Yet College Board researchers also find that, overall, the New SAT is not statistically superior to the old test in predicting success in college: “The results show that the changes made to the SAT did not substantially change how well the test predicts first-year college performance” (Kobrin et al., 2008, p. 1). This result was unexpected, given the strong contribution of the writing test and the fact that the New SAT is almost an hour longer than the old test. 8 A possible explanation is provided by a study by economists at the University of Georgia (Cornwell, Mustard, & Van Parys, 2008). That study found that adding the writing section to the New SAT has rendered the critical reading section almost entirely redundant, so that it does not add significantly to the prediction. The critical reading section is essentially the same as the verbal reasoning section of the old SAT I. It appears that the College Board was trying to have the best of both worlds. The College Board could and did tell admissions officers that the critical reading and math sections of the New SAT were comparable to the verbal and mathematical reasoning sections of the old SAT I. If admissions officers disliked the New SAT, they could ignore the writing exam and then for all practical purposes the old and New SATs would be equivalent. 9 Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 617-629). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

### A2: Should Use AP Tests

#### AP tests not a useful alternative

Charles Murray, 2013, Charles Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC. He is a co-author (with Richard J. Herrnstein) of The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994). Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at the end of card

The College Board also administers 1-hour achievement tests in English literature, United States history, world history, biology, chemistry, physics, two levels of math, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, and Spanish. These are now called “subject tests” or SAT II (more labels I will ignore). I do not discuss the College Board’s advanced placement (AP) tests that can enable students to get college credit, because they cannot serve as a substitute for either the SAT or the achievement tests. Not all schools offer AP courses, and the AP’s 5-point scoring system conveys limited information. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 1501-1505). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). (2008). Report of the Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admission. Arlington, VA: Author. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 111-112). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.