

# TESTING, BEST QUOTES ON

If we teach students to memorize answers, they will do well on tests; if we teach students to solve problems, they will do well in life.

--Jack Price

Marks and grades—originally the measure of learning—have become a substitute for learning. Students work for grades—not knowledge.

--Jesse S. Nirenberg

Evaluation is about growth, not terminal judgement.

--Parker J. Palmer

Let us not judge our students simply on what they know. That is the philosophy of the quiz program. Rather, let them be judged on what they can generate from what they know—how well they leap the barrier from learning to thinking.

--Jerome Brunner

When I've visited Finland, I've found it impossible to remain unmoved by the example of preschools where the learning environment is assessed, rather than the children in it. Having rejected many of the pseudo-academic benchmarks that can, and do, fit on a scorecard, preschool teachers in Finland are free to focus on what's really essential: their relationship with the growing child.

—Erika Christakis

If we differentiate lessons, why do we give standardized tests?

—Dr. Justin Tarte

Every man is entitled to be valued by his best moment.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is indeed one of the great ironies of our time, that having designed computers that can perform the function of information storage and retrieval better than any human, we continue to emphasize in our teaching and testing, information storage and retrieval.

--Edward T. Clark

Research has shown that girls have a much better working memory than boys, so they do much better when they have to read a passage and then answer questions about what they read.

—Ken Wallace

If you're not assessing all the time, how do you know if [students] are getting it or not? We need to know what they know so we can teach them what they *don't* know.

—Jan Borelli

In U.S. schools, then, the pattern is clear: low test scores lead to the closing down, rather than the opening up, of opportunities for disadvantaged and minority students.

—Jeannie Oakes

Extraneous interference occurs when there is something in the assessment, that has nothing to do with the skill being assessed, that gets in the way of the student being able to demonstrate what they know and can do. For example, some performance assessments (for example, one assessing a group discussion) require role-playing, even though the ability to play a role has nothing to do with the ability being assessed. Or, there might be a great deal of reading necessary in order to set up a task, so that the ability to understand the directions gets in the way of being able to perform. (For example, if you are trying to assess ability to think through a problem, you don't want ability to read to get in the way.)

—Judy Arter

Boys and girls respond quite differently to the same test question. When we phrased a math question in terms of batting averages, for example, boys did better. It might be because girls don't know enough about batting averages, or it might be that they convince themselves that they don't know how to respond to it. Girls also do not do as well on questions that deal with war and suffering. Boys, on the other hand, are less likely to perform well on questions that center on social interaction. So, test creators might shy away from a reading passage about a friend coming to someone's rescue.

—Cathy Wendler

One of the most common causes of poor performance in test-taking is failure to follow directions no matter how clear and good they are. Students sometimes do not read questions thoroughly and end up answering a question that is different than the one asked. For example, in reading tests, many students are much more likely to turn to their own memories or experiences than to the text for their answers.

—Edgar H. Rawl

A young economist at Northwestern University named C. Kirabo Jackson....created a proxy measure for students' noncognitive ability, using just four pieces of existing administrative data: attendance, suspensions, on-time grade progression, and overall GPA. Jackson's new index measures, in a fairly crude way, how engaged students were in school—whether they showed up, whether they misbehaved and how hard they worked in their classes. Jackson found that this simple noncognitive proxy was, remarkably, a better predictor than students' test scores of whether the students would go on to attend college, a better predictor of adult wages, and a better predictor of future arrests.

—Paul Tough

Those that make test scores and grades the heart of education hit their targets while entirely missing the point.

—Joe Bower

During my Entrance Examination to Harrow...I was found unable to answer a single question in the Latin paper. I wrote my name at the top of the page. I wrote down the number of the question 'I'. After much reflection I put a bracket round it thus '(I)'. But thereafter I could not think of anything connected with it that was either relevant or true. Incidentally there arrived from nowhere in particular a blot and several smudges. I gazed for two whole hours at this sad spectacle: and then merciful ushers collected my piece of foolscap with all the others and carried it up to the Headmaster's table. It was from these slender indications of scholarship that Dr. Weldon drew the conclusion that I was worthy to pass into Harrow. It is very much to his credit. It showed that he was a man capable of looking beneath the surface of things: a man not dependent upon paper manifestations. I have always had the greatest regard for him.

--Winston Churchill

Examinations are formidable even to the best prepared; for the greatest fool may ask more than the wisest man can answer.

--Charles Caleb Colton

By a small sample we may judge of the whole piece.

—Miguel de Cervantes

Test results should not be a substitute for judgment but they can provide a measure of objectivity that can assist in the decision-making process.

—Laurence J. Peter

Aptitude tests show that you will succeed in a business where your father is boss.

--P. Sieler

Backward, turn backward,  
O time in your flight;  
And tell me just one thing  
I studied last night.

--Jo Hisel

If the Aborigine drafted an IQ test, all of Western civilization would presumably flunk it.

--Stanley Garn

I believe that the testing of the student's achievements in order to see if he meets some criterion held by the teacher, is directly contrary to the implications of therapy for significant learning.

--Carl R. Rogers

Too many children now think learning is filling in answer bubbles. The experience of learning has been replaced by multiple choice tests.

—Robert John Meehan

Examinations are harmless when the examinee is indifferent to their result, but as soon as they matter, they begin to distort his attitude to education and to conceal its purpose. The more depends on them, the worse their effect.

--Sir Richard Livingstone

As we read the school reports upon our children, we realize with a sense of relief that can rise to delight that—thank Heaven—nobody is reporting in this fashion upon us.

--J. B. Priestley

The white, cool, thinly ruled record book sat over us from their desks all day long, and had remorselessly entered into it each day...our attendance, our conduct, our 'effort,' our merits and demerits and to the last possible decimal point in calculation, our standing in an unending series of tests—surprise tests, daily tests, weekly tests, formal mid-term tests, final tests. They never stopped trying to dig out of us whatever small morsel of feet we had managed to get down the night before. We had to prove that we were really alert, ready for anything, always in the race.

--Alfred Kazin

Time passes.  
Will you?

--Unknown

Poor grades are like injuries. Seek help before they become fatal.

--Unknown

Now I lay me down to rest,  
A pile of books upon my chest.  
If I should die before I wake,  
That's one less test  
I'll have to take.

--Unknown

A small boy said to his friend, 'It may be unconstitutional, but I always pray before an exam.'

--Unknown

Nothing makes a *little* knowledge as dangerous as examination time.

--Unknown

In an examination those who do not wish to know ask questions of those who cannot tell.

--Sir Walter Raleigh

Assessment has become a full-fledged disaster in its own right. It is discriminatory, and it stigmatizes and disempowers individuals for life. It doesn't encourage anyone to read, write, learn, or think, though it does leave students and teachers frustrated, confused, despondent, resentful, and angry. I don't think assessment has any redeeming features, but, if it has, we are paying an exorbitant price for them. Assessment spawns difficulties faster than they can be dealt with. We don't need more tests or better tests: we need to extricate ourselves from tests.

--Frank Smith

To chide a tennis player for training himself with a view to winning the match, instead of acquiring skill in the game, would be absurd....If marks are not an adequate measure of what the course is intended to impart, then the examination is defective.

--Lawrence Lowell (1926)

This court concludes that SAT scores capture a student's academic achievements no more than a student's yearbook photograph captures the full range of her experiences in high school.

—U.S. District Judge  
John Walker (In  
ruling that New  
York State's  
scholarship  
program, which  
bases awards on  
SAT scores,  
discriminates  
against females)

Never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow.

--Plato

When you have measurements, you have performance. When you have no measurements, you have excuses.

--Peter Drucker

An endeavor to please elders is at the bottom of high marks and mediocre careers.

--John Chapman

Finals, the very name of which implies that nothing of importance can happen after it.

--David Lodge

The invention of IQ does a great disservice to creativity in education.

--Joel Hildebrand

The papers have been collected; they are yours to mark. What do you need to know, to consider, to do? Here is perhaps the most difficult test of teaching skill; for what you write on the student's paper should have more than one result. Will your comments lead him to write again, or to fear writing? Will they stimulate a desire to write better, or merely a fear of making errors? Will you be opening an exchange of understanding, or will you and the student communicate less and less from now on? What happens when the paper is returned, carrying your addition to the ideas expressed? How do you mark this paper?

--Lou L. Brabant

Examinations measure Examinees.

--Sir Walter Raleigh

No instrument smaller than the world is fit to measure men and women.

--Sir Walter Raleigh

Teaching writing is difficult, and I suppose that many teachers emphasize form over content because grammar is closer to arithmetic and easier to mark right or wrong. Content ought to be the first consideration of any teacher of writing.

--Andy Rooney

To narrow down our curriculum and focus to just what is 'on the test' can take away the inquiry, passion, and the joy of learning.

—Robert John Meehan

I believe very strongly that noticing and praising whatever a student does well improves writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly, and that this is especially important for the less able writers who need all the encouragement they can get.

--Paul Diederich

Evaluation is an everyday role, not a separate function done on a special occasion.

--James Moffett

The teaching model of traditional education consciously serves the needs of a machine age, industrial economy. In practice it maximizes failure. Its criteria for academic performance are based on finding a 'norm' to measure against; it grades 'on the curve.' Time is structured, scheduled, and fixed uniformly to meet the requirements of the school. Students are forced to compete to achieve as much as they can within the periods of time allotted for each activity....This design requires that most students fail or do less well most of the time so that a minority of them can be labeled 'excellent.' The system sorts students into A, B, C, D, and F much like a machine that sorts eggs into jumbo, extra large, large, medium and small. Thus, the main functional focus of the system is not learning, it is screening out.

--Lewis J. Perelman

It's easy to give a test but it only tells you something at the extremes. The totally incompetent teacher and the totally incompetent arithmetic student—they'll pop out in a test. In a good school, you wouldn't have to give a test. You'd know who's having a problem. Testing reduces teaching to mechanics, and as a principal, I don't want mechanical teachers.

--Theodore R. Sizemore

I would have liked to have been examined in history, poetry and writing essays...I should have liked to be asked what I knew. They always tried to ask me what I did not know.

--Winston S. Churchill

Do your children view themselves as successes or failures? Are they being encouraged to be inquisitive or passive? Are they afraid to challenge authority and to question assumptions? Do they feel comfortable adapting to change? Are they easily discouraged if they cannot arrive at a solution to a problem? The answers to those questions will give you a better appraisal of their education than any list of courses, grades, or test scores.

--Lawrence Kutner

Anybody at all could get a passing mark with me; let life flunk 'em—I wouldn't.

--Robert Frost

As long as there are final exams, there will always be prayers in public schools.

--Unknown

There is more to knowing than just being correct.

--Benjamin Huff

The problem lies less in the technology of testing than in the ways in which we customarily think about the intellect and in our ingrained views of intelligence. Only if we expand and formulate our view of what counts as human intellect will we be able to devise more appropriate ways of assessing it and more effective ways of educating it.

--Howard Gardner

Of course, it is very important to be sober when you take an exam. Many worthwhile careers in the street-cleaning, fruit-picking and subway-guitar-playing industries have been founded on a lack of understanding of this simple fact.

--Terry Pratchett

### **Twass the Night Before Finals**

Twass the night before finals,  
And all through the college,  
The students were praying  
For last minutes knowledge.



Most were quite sleepy  
But none touched their beds  
While visions of essays  
Danced in their heads.

In my own room,  
I had been pacing,  
And dreading exams  
I soon would be facing.

My roommate was speechless,  
His nose in his books,  
And my comments to him  
Drew unfriendly looks.

I drained all the coffee,  
And brewed a new pot,  
No longer caring  
That my nerves were all shot.

I stared at my notes  
But my thoughts were all muddy  
My eyes went abur.  
I just couldn't study.

'Some pizza might help,'  
I thought with a shiver  
But each place that I called  
Refused to deliver.

I'd nearly concluded  
That life was too cruel,  
With futures depending  
On grades had in school.

When all of a sudden,  
Our door opened wide,  
And Patron Saint Put it Off  
Ambled inside.

His spirit was careless,  
His manner was mellow  
He looked straight at me,  
And started to bellow:

‘What kind of student  
Would make such a fuss  
To toss back at teachers  
What they tossed at us?’

‘On Cliff Notes! On Crib Notes!  
On Last Year’s Exams!  
On Wingit and Slingit,  
And Last Minute Crams!’

His message delivered,  
He vanished from sight,  
But we heard him laughing  
Outside in the night.

‘Your teachers have pegged you,  
So just do your best.  
Happy Finals to All,  
And to all a good test.’

*--www.laughnet.net*

Analogous to the economic principle known as Gresham’s Law, bad tests will drive out good tests in a high-stakes environment. The current accountability fad—which was launched for political, not educational, reasons—inexorably dumbs down assessment. It leaves us with the sort of conventional standardized tests that are more consistent with the purposes of rating and ranking, bribing and threatening.

*--Alfie Kohn*

We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves.

*--Arthur Costa*

Good assessment starts with a vision of success.

*--Rick Stiggins*

The truth is, standardized testing is an effective tool for diagnosing what students have learned, what they still need to learn and how they are learning in comparison to other students who will someday be their competition in the work world. Though no one enjoys a test, or the pressure it creates, teachers and parents need the information from testing so they can meet a child's individual needs more effectively.

--Barbara Dorff

Children who are protected from frank criticism written in 'harsh' colors are gravely shortchanged. In the global economy that awaits them, young Americans will be competing with other young people from all parts of the world whose teachers do not hesitate to use red pens.

--Christina Hoff Sommers

Now I Lay Me  
Down to Study,  
I Pray the Lord I  
Won't Go Nutty.

If I Should Fail to  
Learn this Junk,  
I Pray the Lord  
I Will Not Flunk.

But If I Do,  
Don't Pity Me at All,  
Just Lay My Bones  
In the Study Hall.

Tell My Prof  
I Did My Best,  
Then Pile My  
Books upon My Chest.

Now I Lay Me  
Down to Rest,  
And Pray I'll Pass  
Tomorrow's Test.

If I Should Die Before I Wake,  
That's One less Test I'll Have to Take.

--Unknown

Go on to sleep now,  
Third grader of mine.  
The test is tomorrow,  
But you'll do just fine.  
It's reading and math.  
Forget all the rest.  
You don't need to know  
What is not on the test.

Each box that you mark  
On each test that you take ...  
Remember your teachers.  
Their jobs are at stake.  
Your score is their score,  
But don't get all stressed.  
They'd never teach anything  
Not on the test.

Sleep ... sleep ... and as you progress  
You'll learn there's a lot  
That is not on the test.

Debate is skill that useful to know  
Unless you're in Congress or talk radio  
Where shouting and spouting and spewing are blessed  
'Cause rational discourse' was not on the test.

Thinking's important ...  
It's good to know how.  
And someday you'll learn to  
But that someday's not now.  
Go on to sleep now.  
You need your rest.  
Don't think about thinking ...  
It's not on the test.

—John Forster and  
Tom Chapin

A two-minute conversation with a parent is still better than the best report card.  
--Allison Harris

Teaching that gets results requires specific skills—and so does accurate assessment.  
--Robert L. DeBruyn

To know your gain, you need the right yardstick.  
--Robert L. DeBruyn

The problem facing America and its schools cannot be solved solely by providing more-accurate reporting of discouraging numbers.  
--Harris N. Miller

Those who speak most of progress measure it by quantity and not by quality.  
--George Santayana

A student's progress should be measured in terms of the questions they are asking, not merely by the answers that they are reciting.  
—Robert John Meehan

Without data, you are just another person with an opinion.  
--Andreas Schleicher

The human brain is amazing. It functions 24/7 from when we were born & only stops when you take a test or talk to someone attractive.  
—Unknown

The invention of the wheel was not a stopping point or a finished product. Just providing a grade or a level on a rubric for an educational activity should also not be a stopped point or viewed as a finished product. Learning is a continuous process. It is too bad that usually in education a grade is associated with, 'I'm done. So, how did I do?' Instead, an evaluation in education should be, 'This is what you have completed so far. Now, how can it be improved?'  
—Mel Janousek

The school's report to the parent is only half the story; for the teacher, the parent's report to the school is needed to round out the picture.  
—W. R. Wees

What gets measured gets done.  
—Tom Peters

Sometimes, the most brilliant and intelligent minds do not shine in standardized tests because they do not have standardized minds.

—Diane Ravitch

To the uneducated, an A is just three sticks.

—A. A. Milne

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

—Albert Einstein

After finals, if you gave me the same test an hour later I probably wouldn't remember a single thing.

—Unknown

Believing we can improve schooling with more tests is like believing you can make yourself grow taller by measuring your height.

—Robert Schaeffer

A piece of you cringes when you hear that your friend has been preparing for the SAT with classes since last summer, and that they're already scoring a 2000. (And what about...the girl taking a summer immersion program to skip ahead and get into AP French her sophomore year? And that internship your best friend has with a Stanford professor?) You can't help but slip into the system of competitive insanity...We are not teenagers. We are lifeless bodies in a system that breeds competition, hatred, and discourages teamwork and genuine learning. We lack sincere passion. We are sick...Why is that not getting through to this community? Why does this insanity that is our school district continue?

—Carolyn Walworth,  
High School Junior

I don't know where I would be today if my teachers' job security was based on how I performed on some standardized test. If their very survival as teachers was based on whether I actually fell in love with the process of learning but rather if I could fill in the right bubble on a test. If they had to spend most of their time desperately drilling us and less time encouraging creativity and original ideas; less time knowing who we were, seeing our strengths and helping us realize our talents.

I honestly don't know where I'd be today if that was the type of education I had. I sure as hell wouldn't be here. I do know that.

—Matt Damon

The preoccupation with accountability has led to a set of measures that favor shallow mimicry and recall behaviors, such as learning vocabulary lists and recognizing shapes and colors (something that a dog can do, by the way, but that is in fact an extraordinarily low bar for most curious 4-year-olds), while devaluing complex, integrative, and syncretic learning.

—Erika Christakis

30 things a standardized test can't measure: Resilience, Passion, Strength, Wit, Faith, Compassion, A Sense of Humor, Intuition, Kindness, Self-Esteem, Intelligence, Motivation, Morals, Fortitude, Work Ethic, Empathy, Courage, Determination, Personality, Manners, Diligence, Common Sense, Ingenuity, Grit, Character, Physical Fitness, A Love of Learning, Effort, Creativity, Life Skills.

—*currclickblog.com*

The pressure to succeed in high school is all too familiar to me. I distinctly remember being a freshman in high school, overwhelmed by the belief that my GPA over the next four years would make or break my life. My daily thought process was that every homework assignment, every project, every test could be the difference. The difference between a great college and a mediocre college. The difference between success and failure. The difference between happiness and misery...I felt the pressure coming from all around me—my parents, my peers, and worst of all, myself. I felt that I had one shot at high school and that my GPA, SAT score, and college applications were the only barometers of my success.

—Jeremy Lin

Repeated high stakes testing has only proven that five out of four students have trouble with fractions.

—Robert John Meehan

Standardized Testing tells us about learning as much as Reality TV tells us about reality.

—Joe Bower

Exemplary teachers will always care more about the people their students will become than the scores on the tests they take.

—Robert John Meehan

We must reject all notions of 'reform' that serve up more of the same: more testing, more 'standards', more uniformity, more conformity, more bureaucracy.

—Tom Peters

I'm willing to wager that not one of our students' dreams include being proficient on a standardized test.

—Robert John Meehan

It is not sufficient, and it may actually undermine our democracy, to concentrate on producing people who do well on standardized tests and who define success as getting a well paid job.

—Nel Noddings

It's tragic that we are mandated to turn so many eager young learners into frustrated test performers.

—Robert John Meehan

Authentic student achievement cannot be measured by test scores alone but also by the small day to day moments of our students' individual triumphs.

—Robert John Meehan

I read so slow. If I have a script, I'm going to read it five times slower than any other actor, but I'll be able to tell you everything in it. It kills me that there are standardized tests geared towards just one kind of child.

—Channing Tatum

We're not going to just test our way to college readiness. We have to work in the hearts and minds of students and engage them in meaningful learning.

—Sean McComb

There is nothing so unequal as equal treatment of unequals.

--*Phi Delta Kappan*

You cannot put the same shoe on every foot.

--Publilius Syrus

One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.

--Maria Montessori

Instead of seeing these children for the blessings that they are, we are measuring them only by the standard of whether they will be future deficits or assets for our nation's competitive needs.

—Jonathan Kozol



A student, teacher, or counselor would look around to make sure no one was listening and then whisper a story about an Asian kid being punished or even kicked out of the house for a night after getting a B or failing to get into Stanford. I'd heard how new East Asian immigrant parents mistakenly transposed the reality of education in, say, China or Korea, which is that how you do on a single test can determine your entire future.

—Hanna Rosin

The child benefits more from being valued than evaluated.

—Don Dinkmeyer

We impose the stress-filled demands and rigors of adulthood on children....We try to measure everyone with an adult yardstick. For children, that means they are made to measure up to adult standards when they should be allowed to be children.

—Dr. Bill Thomas

Nowadays you have to pass a tougher exam to get into college than old-timers did to get out.

--Unknown

A blue book is a booklet for exam taking that's almost as flimsy as the arguments you wrote in it.

—*TL;DR Wikipedia*

The Graduate Management Admission Test [or GMAT] is a test to determine whether you'll be able to put off getting a job for a few more years.

—*TL;DR Wikipedia*

So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters, and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say. But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery.

--Virginia Woolf

To narrow down our curriculum and focus to just what is 'on the test' can take away the inquiry, passion, and the joy of learning.

—Robert John Meehan

Testing is not a substitute for curriculum and instruction. Good education cannot be achieved by a strategy of testing children, shaming educators, and closing schools.

—Diane Ravitch

[Math] curriculum is obsessed with jargon and nomenclature seemingly for no other purpose than to provide teachers with something to test the students on.

—Paul Lockhart

We should train ourselves not to ask ‘How intelligent he/she is?’ but ‘Which intelligence does he/she have most of?’

—Charles Handy

I have not seen that standardised tests make the profession less attractive, though some principals respond to them in a way that drives the best teachers out of their schools (by over-emphasising test prep in the school curriculum for example). On the other hand, great teachers want benchmarks to measure progress and tests can help with that.

—Wendy Kopp

I am not against standardized tests. There are tests and tests and tests, and, to simplify, the ones I favor are criterion-referenced tests of skills, aligned with the curriculum. Social and emotional skills are important but skills are too. I find it heartbreaking that this is so often seen as an either-or choice. To get to the richness of studying literature, for example, you must first be an adept and confident reader. Whether you are is something a good test can measure.

—Nicholas Lemann

I do believe that when your child does poorly on a test, your first step should not necessarily be to attack the teacher or the school’s curriculum. It should be to look at the idea that, maybe, the child didn’t work hard enough.

—Amy Chua

...we’re in English class, which for most of us is an excruciating exercise in staying awake through the great classics of literature. These works-- groundbreaking, incendiary, timeless-- have been pureed by the curriculum monsters into a digestible pabulum of themes and factoids we can spew back on a test. Scoring well on tests is the sort of happy thing that gets the school district the greenbacks they crave. Understanding and appreciating the material are secondary.

—Libba Bray

As teaching practices change in...more open, child-oriented directions the gap between the 'lessons' of instruction and the content of traditional tests becomes wider.

--Edward Chittenden

Students have a right to know the intended learning outcomes and receive feedback regarding their progress during the learning process. Assessments have traditionally been secretive and summative, preventing students from having an opportunity to improve their performance.

—Grant Wiggins

Student evaluation is basic to student growth. It demands careful, thoughtful attention. Yet what typically passes for student evaluation, what fills the public discourse, is an overarching model of assessment, built around a host of standardized tests, that doesn't get particularly close to student learning and doesn't provide teachers with much information of consequence.

—Vita Perrone

It may surprise many citizens that most school districts cannot state the extent to which the standardized tests used in their schools assess the curriculum. The divorce between testing and curriculum may be one reason many districts oppose increased testing. It is also why teacher antipathy towards testing is usually militant. Most teachers have never learned to use test results and relate them to their own teaching objectives. Ordinarily, standardized test questions are considerably more definitive than most classroom teaching objectives. Furthermore, when the curriculum is so vague that teachers can do most anything, standardized tests exert a kind of control not sensed from other quarters.

—Fenwick English

The teaching of skills is an expected outcome from the increased emphasis on exams that are devoted almost entirely to testing for them. With the enormous pressure politically to get more bottom-line achievement from these kinds of tests, increased attention to the so-called basic skills is the result. Teachers have responded to the criticism, and now that they are responding to the criticism, they're caught in another situation: skills are being taught almost entirely content-free.

—John Goodlad

Decisions based on test scores must be made with the awareness of the imponderables in human behavior. We cannot measure the rare qualities of character that are a necessary ingredient of great performance. We cannot measure aspiration or purpose. We cannot measure courage, vitality or determination.

—Nelson Rockefeller

At root here is a fundamental dilemma. Those personal qualities that we hold dear—resilience and courage in the face of stress, a sense of craft in our work, a commitment to justice and caring in our social relationships, a dedication to advancing the public good in our communal life—are exceedingly difficult to assess. And so, unfortunately, we are apt to measure what we can, and eventually come to value what is measured over what is left unmeasured. The shift is subtle, and occurs gradually. It first invades our language and then slowly begins to dominate our thinking. It is all around us, and we too are a part of it. In neither academic nor popular discourse about schools does one find nowadays much reference to the important human qualities noted above. The language of academic achievement tests has become the primary rhetoric of schooling.

—*Committee of the  
National Academy  
of Education*

[How] may we best prepare our young people to keep their individuality, initiative, creativity in a highly organized, intricately meshed society?... Our conception of excellence must embrace many kinds of achievement at many levels.... There is excellence in abstract intellectual activity in art, in music, in managerial activities, in craftsmanship, in human relations, in technical work.

—Nelson Rockefeller

In its briefest form, an outcome is a culminating demonstration of learning. It is a demonstration: what it is the kids will actually do. Most people have thought over the years that the outcomes were the curriculum content: What will the kids know? What can they recall on a test? But outcomes are not content, they're performances.

—Bill Spady

The normal curve is a distribution most appropriate to chance and random activity. Education is a purposeful activity and we seek to have students learn what we would teach. Therefore, if we are effective, the distribution of grades will be anything but a normal curve. In fact, a normal curve is evidence of our failure to teach.

—Benjamin Bloom

Current intelligence-testing practices require examinees to answer but not to pose questions. In requiring only the answering of questions, these tests are missing a vital half of intelligence- the asking of questions...

—Robert Sternberg

All that exists, exists in some amount and can be measured.

—Edward Thorndike

Curriculum leaders understand that curriculum alignment consists of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Without a method of measurement, then it is highly unlikely that the curriculum will be implemented across classrooms.

—Steven Weber

Standardized tests should not define the curriculum. They should be used to assess whether students have accomplished the objectives of the curriculum. It is undeniable, however, that tests have become the curriculum in some instances. That is, instead of an elected or appointed board of education defining a curriculum with locally adopted objectives, a test publisher elected by no one defines the curriculum and the objectives.

In short, a school district should know how well a particular test matches its curriculum. The curriculum should state precisely what students are expected to learn, and the testing program should be aligned to the objectives. When test data are obtained, then the district has the capability to make adjustments among all three elements (objectives, teaching, and testing) to improve pupil achievement.

--Fenwick English

Students have a right to know the intended learning outcomes and receive feedback regarding their progress during the learning process. Assessments have traditionally been secretive and summative, preventing students from having an opportunity to improve their performance.

—Grant Wiggins

Standardized tests, for the most part, require students to recall or recognize fragmented and isolated bits of information. They rarely ask students to apply that information, and they almost never require students to exhibit proficiencies in the 'higher forms' of cognition, such as complex reasoning and self-directedness.

—Robert Marzano &  
Arthur Costa

Student evaluation is basic to student growth. It demands careful, thoughtful attention. Yet what typically passes for student evaluation, what fills the public discourse, is an overarching model of assessment, built around a host of standardized tests, that doesn't get particularly close to student learning and doesn't provide teachers with much information of consequence.

—Vita Perrone

Decisions based on test scores must be made with the awareness of the imponderables in human behavior. We cannot measure the rare qualities of character that are a necessary ingredient of great performance. We cannot measure aspiration or purpose. We cannot measure courage, vitality or determination.

—Nelson Rockefeller

If I ran a school, I'd give the average grade to the ones who gave me all the right answers, for being good parrots. I'd give the top grades to those who made a lot of mistakes and told me about them, and then told me what they learned from them.

—Buckminster Fuller

Because we cannot measure the things that have the most meaning, we give the most meaning to the things we can measure.

—Fred Hargadon

The final evaluation should not be the hardest part of the course.

—Ken Whytock

If the school is to be judged by its poor products, why can't a factory be judged by its scrap pile?

--Marie Fraser

We will not find the solution to problems of violence, alienation, ignorance, and unhappiness in increasing our security apparatus, imposing more tests, punishing schools for their failure to produce 100 percent proficiency, or demanding that teachers be knowledgeable in 'the subjects they teach.'

--Nel Noddings

Merely to stuff the child with a lot of information, making him pass examinations, is the most unintelligent form of education.

—Jiddu Krishnamurti

Curriculum, examinations, commencement, degrees are all part of the same system; they are all inherited from the Middle Ages, and in some form they go back to the twelfth century.

--Charles Homer Haskins

Why are teachers told to differentiate their instruction but standardize their tests?

—Unknown

Testing has ruled out A.D.D., A.D.H.D and autism. Turns out, your kid's an asshole.  
—Chris Mann

The consequences of using high-stakes tests to grant or withhold high school diplomas may be positive or negative. For example, if high-stakes graduation tests motivate students to work harder in school, the result may be increased learning for those who pass the test and maybe even for those who fail. Similarly, if high-stakes tests give teachers and other educators guidance on what knowledge and skills are most important for students to learn, that may improve curriculum and instruction. Minimum competency tests do appear to have affected instruction by increasing the amount of class time spent on basic skills, but available evidence about the possible effects of graduation tests on learning and on high school dropout rates is inconclusive.

- ❑ Recommendation: High-school graduation decisions are inherently certification decisions; the diploma should certify that the student has achieved acceptable levels of learning. Tests and other information used for this purpose should afford each student a fair opportunity to demonstrate the required levels of knowledge and skill in accordance with psychometric standards for certification tests.
- ❑ Recommendation: Graduation tests should provide evidence of mastery of material taught. Thus, there is a need for evidence that the test content is representative of what students have been taught.
- ❑ Recommendation: Students who are at risk of failing a graduation test should be advised of their situation well in advance and provided with appropriate instruction that would improve their chances of passing.

—*High Stakes: Testing  
for Tracking,  
Promotion, and  
Graduation*

Students today spend months learning the test. Teachers hate it, the schools hate it, but they are forced to do it. Did you hear that often? Oh sure. It's very real. Students are taking up to 25 percent of class time preparing for tests, And there are all these extra benchmark tests that kids take—field tests and practice tests. I would estimate that almost three years out of school lifetime is spent on taking these tests. Clearly it distorts the curriculum. We have evidence that it causes teachers to spend far more time on the tested subjects because they want the kids to do well. it's a very difficult balancing act for teachers to try to promote deeper learning and creativity when students are mandated to perform well on these narrow measurements.

—Anya Kamenetz

Rather than sorting students into winners and losers, assessment for learning can put all students on a winning streak. Historically, a major role of assessment has been to detect and highlight differences in student learning in order to rank students according to their achievement. Such assessment experiences have produced winners and losers. Some students succeed early and build on winning streaks to learn more as they grow; others fail early and often, falling farther and farther behind,

As we all know, the mission of schools has changed. Today's schools are less focused on merely sorting students and more focused on helping all students succeed in meeting standards. This evolution in the mission of schools means that we can't let students who have not yet met standards fall into losing streaks, succumb to hopelessness, and stop trying.

Our evolving mission compels us to embrace a new vision of assessment that can tap the wellspring of confidence, motivation, and learning potential that resides within every student. First, we need to tune in to the emotional dynamics of the assessment experience from the point of view of students— both assessment winners and assessment losers. These two groups experience assessment practices in vastly different ways....To enable all students to experience the productive emotional dynamics of winning, we need to move from exclusive reliance on assessments that verify learning to the use of assessments that support learning—that is, assessments for learning. Assessment for learning turns day-to-day assessment into a teaching and learning process that enhances (instead of merely monitoring) student learning.

—Rick Stiggins

The goal of assessment for learning is not to eliminate failure, but rather to keep failure from becoming chronic and thus inevitable in the mind of the learner. Duke University basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski has pointed out that the key to winning is to avoid losing twice in a row. He meant that if you lose once and fix it, you can remain confident. Losing twice, though, can raise questions, crack that confidence, and make recovery more difficult. So when learners suffer a failure, we must get them back to success as quickly as possible to restore their confidence in their capabilities. This is the emotional dynamic of assessment for learning.

—Rick Stiggins

We must begin to evaluate our assessments in terms of both the quality of the evidence they yield and the effect they have on future learning. High-quality assessments encourage further learning; low-quality assessments hinder learning. Understanding the emotional dynamics of the assessment experience from the student's perspective is crucial to the effective use of assessments to improve schools.

—Rick Stiggins



How did we become such a test-obsessed society? It's such an interesting question, and I did have to delve pretty far into the history of intelligence testing to answer it. We really are interested in science. We're interested in rational thinking. We like to have numbers and we like to have measurements. Measurements are a great way of making decisions, but you have to be careful that you are actually measuring something that's real. The problem with tests has always been that human intelligence is extremely elusive and any measurement of it is going to be just an approximation. When we ascribe precision to these measurements, they may be precise, but they don't necessarily tell us anything important about the real world. The sinister side of the obsession with standardized testing is very deep and old as well. The people who developed intelligence tests—almost to a man—were interested in superior and inferior mental ability, what it meant about eugenics, and the sterilization of the feeble-minded. To me, that stems from, a very deep distrust of difference and of diversity.

—Anya Kamenetz

One of the things I talk about...is the importance of assessing expressive language. That's a key skill for employers, for life, writing and speaking. Most standardized tests don't do a good job of that. The reason for that is mass testing is mass graded, and the grading of essays is not very good quality. There's no easy fix. The type of testing that we've incorporated in schools has been marked by a mass production mentality. We test what we test because it's easy and cheap to test it that way. Until we move toward a mentality that's a little bit smarter about it, we're not going to get anything valuable out of these tests.

—Anya Kamenetz

The problem with tests has always been that intelligence is extremely elusive and any measurement of it is going to be just an approximation.

—Anya Kamenetz

Students who perform poorly on standardized reading tests often approach test taking with a fundamental misconception: Knowing they'll be tested on the meaning of a passage, they read to 'get it all' instead of reading to answer given questions.

—Belta Gordon

The results of 24 studies conducted in natural settings suggest that programs of training in test-taking skills produce, on average, significant improvements in students' scores on achievement tests. It is clear that programs extending over a period of five weeks or more, and therefore involving more contact hours, have a significantly greater impact.

—Gordon Samson

Most of what we do is done within the context of a purpose. Test taking is no different. Knowing the purpose of the test will help motivate students. For example, test scores play a role to promotion decisions and summer school attendance. Let your students know that the test results provide schools, teachers and parents with an objective way of seeing their strengths and weaknesses. They help schools assess the effectiveness of the instructional program and provide an indicator of how Chicago's public school students compare with other students across the country. Also, students should understand how the results will be used and how they are of direct relevance to instructional activities. Students should understand that standardized testing is a normal school activity and that, at certain grades, tests are part of the educational planning process.

—*Chicago Public Schools*

What are some possible explanations for such extraordinary performance by Asian Americans? Several come readily to mind, but certainly require further exploration:

- Parents who value their children's education so much that they inculcate the centrality of that education in to every aspect of their everyday lives.
- Parents who actively monitor and supplement what the schools teach their children.
- Parents, and therefore children, who believe that academic effort and hard work are rewarded with accomplishment.
- Parents, and therefore students, who support the schools.
- Parents, and therefore students, who believe in taking the most challenging courses in the greatest numbers.

—Daniel B. Taylor

Students have to learn not to jump at the first answer that appears to be correct, especially as these will often be the very kind test makers select for inclusion among a set of responses, but to consider carefully all the possible answers to difficult problems.

—Edgar H. Rawl

Tests determine which classes students will take, which schools they can attend, and even which level of academic potential they are expected to achieve. Standardized tests influence, where they do not dictate, decisions about institutional goals, teacher performance, and program funding. Not surprisingly, these measures drive the curriculums in our schools and dominate instruction in the classroom.

—B. R. Gifford

Test-wiseness is defined as a subject's capacity to utilize the characteristics and formats of the test and/or the test-taking situation to receive a high score. Test-wiseness is logically independent of the examinee's knowledge of the subject matter for which the items are supposedly measuring.

—J. Bishop Millman

Students should also guard against inferring the answer before reading the question completely. Exercise special care in answering more complex questions such as negatively stated items and items having more than one clause.

—J. Bishop Millman

The single most common error, especially in the secondary schools, is for students to slip back into old habits formed in classroom practice. Students will circle or put single lines through answer spaces on machine-scored tests. Others switch from special pencils to ball point pens. Still others 'get one place off' and lose credit for entire sections.

—*Maryland State  
Department of  
Education*

If you are focusing on the reliability of a test, all you need to ask is—are the results of the test consistent? If I take the test today, a week from now and a month from now, will my results be the same? If an assessment is reliable, your results will be very similar no matter when you take the test. If the results are inconsistent, the test is not considered reliable.

—Michael Callans

Validity is a bit more complex because it is more difficult to assess than reliability. There are various ways to assess and demonstrate that an assessment is valid, but in simple terms, validity refers to *how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure*.

There are several approaches to determine the validity of an assessment, including the assessment of content, criterion-related and construct validity.

- An assessment demonstrates **content validity** when the criteria it is measuring aligns with the content of the job. Also, the extent to which that content is essential to job performance (versus useful-to-know) is part of the process in determining how well the assessment demonstrates content validity.

For example, the ability to type quickly would likely be considered a large and crucial aspect of the job for an executive secretary compared to an executive. While the executive is probably required to type, such a skill is not

as nearly as important to performing that job. Ensuring an assessment demonstrates content validity entails judging the degree to which test items and job content match each other,

- An assessment demonstrates **criterion-related validity** if the results can be used to predict a facet of job performance. Determining if an assessment predicts performance requires that assessment scores are statistically evaluated against a measure of employee performance.

For example, an employer interested in understanding how well an integrity test identifies individuals that are likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors might compare applicants' integrity test scores to how many accidents or injuries those individuals have on the job, if they engage in on-the-job drug use, or how many times they ignore company policies. The degree to which the assessment is effective in predicting such behaviors is the extent to which it exhibits criterion-related validity.

- An assessment demonstrates **construct validity** if it is related to other assessments measuring the same psychological construct—a construct being a concept used to explain behavior (e.g., intelligence, honesty).

For example, intelligence is a construct that is used to explain a person's ability to understand and solve problems. Construct validity can be evaluated by comparing intelligence scores on one test to intelligence scores on other tests (i.e., *Wonderlic Cognitive Ability Test* to the *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale*).

—Michael Callans

Stressed about multiple choice questions? Here's some test taking strategy secrets about multiple choice tests that your professor may not want you to know.

College students **hate multiple choice test questions**. They look easier than essay exams, but they're not! In my experience, students do much better on my essay questions than my multiple choice questions. So the next time you're sitting there with test anxiety, staring blankly at your...form, remember these **test-taking** strategy secrets about multiple choice tests that your professor may not want you to know.

- More often than not, **the correct answer is B or C**. This isn't always true, of course, but test writers are most likely to gravitate towards one of these answers.
- If there is an **'all of the above'** option, chances are high that's the answer. If you know more than one answer is correct, there's a very good chance it's 'all of the above.'

- **'None of the above'** is usually wrong. This isn't always the case, but test writers often throw that in because they've run out of ideas.
- Has everyone ever told you that 'the first thing you think of is probably right?' and that you shouldn't change your answers? This is not true.
- If you don't know the answer, **always guess**. Why wouldn't you?
- You can often rule out answers that contain **generalization terms**, like 'always' or 'never.' Answers that contains words like 'usually' or 'mostly' are more likely to be correct.
- Don't worry, about the pattern of the answers. If you answer B to four questions in a row, you might be right.
- **Don't spend too much time** on each question, especially if there are essay questions in the test as well. Essay questions take longer, and students usually do better on them.
- Ask your professor ahead of time for sample multiple choice questions from a previous test, to give you an idea of what to expect. Most professors don't mind.

—Naomi Rockler-Gladen

In assessing perceptual, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities of disadvantaged children, . . . test-wisenes has been described as . . . prerequisite abilities needed for taking standardized readiness tests. These abilities include such factors as an adequate understanding of the perceptual positioning concepts of (*left*, *right*, and *opposite*). Children drilled in a number of tasks to develop these concepts, scored significantly higher on the Metropolitan Readiness Test than children receiving no training.

—Randolph E. Sarnacki

Standardized tests can help by keeping the eyes of all concerned with the learning process fixed on the main target. By revealing variation in the effectiveness of different instructional procedures or different curricular arrangements. By motivating teachers' efforts to teach well and pupils' efforts to learn well. By recognizing and rewarding success in learning. By making possible comparisons— between pupils, between teachers, and between schools—of the outcome of efforts to learn. By causing schooling to become a purposeful educational enterprise whose results can be assessed systematically. No school can do a good job and show that it is doing a good job without systematically auditing the results it is getting. Standardized tests of educational achievement provide one good means for making such audits.

—Robert L. Ebel

Despite the visibility of testing and its obvious importance, testing generally is a weak aspect of secondary school instruction. Classroom tests tend to focus on lower-order knowledge and skills at the expense of broad understanding and meaningful

applications. That which teachers emphasize on tests, moreover, often appears out of line with that which they have emphasized during instruction. Finally, teachers rarely use test information as a guide to improving instruction, and students rarely use test results to help them decide how to do better. The gap between the potential of testing as a teaching-learning tool and the reality of current testing practices is wide.

—Glen Fielding and Joan Shaughnessy

The older the students, the less likely are they to believe that their scores on standardized tests reflect their actual abilities, a new study reports. Scott Paris, a professor of education at the University of Michigan, surveyed 900 Arizona, Michigan, California, and Florida students in grades 8—11 and found:

- Seventy-five percent of second-graders, but only five percent of eleventh-graders, agreed that ‘test scores show how intelligent you are.’
- Ninety-five percent of second-graders, but only forty percent of eleventh-graders, agreed that ‘most students try to do their best on tests.’

—*Instructor Magazine*

In documenting the ‘process of learning,’ teachers in a school might wish to include information about a child’s originality, responsibility, initiative, and independence of effort. In relation to the ‘content of learning,’ they might wish to consider materials a child produces (writings, drawings, projects), evidence that instruction deals with important concepts as well as necessary skills, and evidence that a child finds meaning in learning, that it is not merely rote. And in relation to the ‘context of learning’ they might consider the basic human relationships that exist—child to child, child to teacher, and teacher to teacher—and see how much respect there is for the efforts and feelings of others.

—Vito Perrone

Although test-wise examinees may use their general test-taking skills on all types of tests, it is safe to say that ‘test-wiseness’ more readily manifests itself on multiple-choice tests, where maximum item-writing skills are required. Indeed, the majority of test-wiseness research has centered around the recognition of secondary-item cues that occur in flawed multiple-choice items. For example, one item fault known as ‘absurd options’ allows the test-wise examinee to eliminate one or more of the alternatives because of logical inconsistencies with the item.

More important to the individual test-taker, individual differences in test-wiseness may exaggerate differences in observed scores, perhaps leading to erroneous conclusions concerning levels of content knowledge. More error in measurement is likely to originate from students who have too little, rather than too much, skill in taking

tests. This problem is compounded daily, due to the ever-increasing use of multiple-choice tests, new multiple-choice item types, and an increasingly heterogeneous pool of prospective test-takers.

—Randolph E. Sarnacki

That which needs to change in order to make room for more thoughtfulness in the schools is not just the taking of tests—which clearly does not require students to create, construct, negotiate, and communicate meaning—but the whole concept of testing itself. The concept that testing is initiated externally from the student, separate from the learning process, and primarily aimed at determining whether inert knowledge is in students' short-term memories exercises far too much influence over school people today. The goals of thoughtfulness are that students internalize capacities to evaluate their learning, do so as they learn, and do so in ways that exhibit their capacity to be performing thinkers, problem-solvers, and inquirers. The dominant technology neither tells us whether those goals are being met, nor encourages anyone to find out, nor models a kind of inquiry into achievement that students and teachers might profitably imitate.

—Rexford Brown

Consider the following cycle of behavioral cause and effect: When a school's social climate fails to meet students' emotional needs, they tend to feel 'disconnected' from the school. That sense of disconnectedness produces apathy, which results in less effort, which causes poor performance, which in turn produces a lack of teacher motivation to continue to meet student needs. This lack of teacher involvement fuels further student apathy. Middle schools must take the initiative to break that cycle. As teachers and schools attempt to be more responsive to students' needs, students become more motivated to please the teacher. If learning is designed with sufficient attention to the social and emotional climate in which it occurs, students motivation and performance should improve.

—Cathy Vatterott

The literacy of thoughtfulness calls for a new concept of testing, one that reflects the active nature of learning. Innovation in testing and assessment is following four paths:

1. Expanding existing tests and data-gathering instruments.
2. More innovative analysis and packaging of test information.
3. Adapting and legitimizing evaluation schemes and instruments used in other fields.
4. Breaking new ground through computer testing, video evaluation, tying evaluation to learning, student-created tests/assessments/evaluations/research projects, climate assessment tools, and input from the community.

With all of these possibilities, no one should claim that outcomes ‘cannot’ be assessed.

—Rexford Brown

Designers of performance assessments should use these eight basic design criteria:

1. Assessment tasks should be, whenever possible, authentic and meaning-full—worth mastering.
2. The set of tasks should be a valid sample from which apt generalizations about overall performance of complex capacities can be made.
3. The scoring criteria should be authentic, with points awarded or taken off for essential successes and errors, not for what is easy to count or observe.
4. The performance standards that anchor the scoring should be genuine benchmarks, not arbitrary cut scores or provincial school norms.
5. The context of the problems should be rich, realistic, and enticing with the inevitable constraints on access to time, resources, and advance knowledge of the tasks and standards appropriately minimized.
6. The tasks should be validated.
7. The scoring should be feasible.
8. Assessment results should be reported and used so that all customers from the data are satisfied.

—Grant Wiggins

## **10 COMMANDMENTS OF TESTING IN MIDDLE GRADES**

1. Thou shalt not overuse, any one testing strategy.
2. Thou shalt not spring surprise tests on students.
3. Thou shalt not administer tests without adequate preparation on the part of students.
4. Thou shalt not use a test as a threat to motivate or discipline students.
5. Thou shalt not avoid using tests as feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of classroom delivery systems.
6. Thou shalt not use paper-and-pencil tests as the only means of student evaluation.
7. Thou shalt not overlook the importance of measuring growth in both affective and cognitive areas of student development.
8. Thou shalt not fail to provide adequate feedback to students on test results.
9. Thou shalt not neglect to reduce test anxiety among students.
10. Thou shalt not limit test questions to the lower levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

—Sandra Schurr



## GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING TEACHER-MADE TESTS

In preparing effective tests, teachers should keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Identify the specific learning outcomes before writing the test items.
2. Match the content of the test with your instructional material.
3. Design item formats parallel to that of the instructional material.
4. Develop and follow test administration procedures consistently and precisely.
5. Ensure that test scoring was done correctly.
6. Develop your own test-rating criteria before administering the test.
7. Write clear, unambiguous test items.
8. Write test items at a level of difficulty that is reasonable for your students.
9. Provide students with a distraction-free test environment.
10. Help students become test-wise.

—Philip A. Griswold

Thinking is a complex process. To describe and assess it, therefore, is different from assessing information. A student may be able to demonstrate a bank of information about a given subject, but measuring how that student thinks about that information is another matter. The reasoning, problem-solving behavior a student does while thinking requires an environment in which he can consider a problem from more than one perspective and allow an idea to incubate, form, and take shape over time. The typical testing environment in which the student works within a limited time frame, pressured to find the ‘correct’ answer, does not support this.

Students must be motivated to think, but tests as they are usually designed don’t provide this. Tests provide examples that are removed from the student’s daily life; they are, at best, simulations of situations students may have encountered at one time. They typically do not ask the student to **generate** thinking, but, to react to the few choices presented by the test.

The best way to assess thinking is within the context of the ongoing classroom, over time, in which the student demonstrates the ability to incubate, originate, reflect upon, and reason about ideas in a given subject area. We need to allow the student to think in the same way it takes place— over time—not during a rushed testing period. The best measures for thinking processes are learning logs and journals, in which students reflect on their work over time, close observation of students in discussions, and narrative test questions.

—Bena Kallick

The overuse and misuse of standardized tests in schools tends to diminish education in general, and the teaching of good writing skills in particular, increasing numbers of educators as well as test publishers, are beginning to see this. However, legisla-

tors and some test coordinators need to understand the long-term ramifications of overusing standardized testing of students.

When standardized tests, particularly criterion-referenced ones, are used selectively and sparingly in conjunction with essay tests, they can be useful tools in assisting the education of students and determining areas of instruction that need more emphasis.

I know of no current testing program that does an adequate job of measuring thinking skills. Progress in this direction can only be made when talented practitioners define the elusive concept of thinking skills and create instruments to measure them.

—William Corbett

Current testing programs do not do an adequate job of assessing student thinking. Thinking is a process that is not very adaptable to the multiple-choice questions found on most standardized tests. The current testing programs best serve to provide information to those removed from the setting to which, learning occurs—to screen, sort, and categorize individuals or institutions.

There is very little progress being made to improve this. Some professional educators are trying to influence decisions already made about testing by business and politicians. However, they are doing this in an arena to which, rules and definitions have already been set. With the tendency for tests to heavily influence what is taught, there may be little attention given to textbooks and curriculums focusing on thinking skills if these skills are not tested by the program.

There is a core of dedicated researchers and educators, usually labeled ‘progressive,’ that has been critical of testing programs for some time. This group insists that the tests do not measure important areas of child growth, including thinking. They have suggested alternatives to standardized testing such as observation and documentation which can be fed back into the learning/thinking process. The group is not very powerful politically at this time. They are, however, helping shape the debate about the use and value of current testing programs.

—Kenneth Haskins

In Pittsburgh, assessment of critical thinking is achieved by analyzing writing samples in response to texts that require students to compare and contrast information, state a position in response to a question, cite evidence from the texts and other experiences, and draw a conclusion,

Most critical thinking testing programs employ a ‘psychometric approach’ designed to measure the ‘product’ of a student’s learning by responding to multiple-choice questions. Multiple-choice testing alone is inadequate for assessing critical thinking skills because the product of critical thinking is so complex. Moreover, in many respects, it is not the product of critical thinking programs that is important, but

rather the process of thought. Psychometric testing programs are not at all adequate to assess or measure this process.

We have begun to address this by researching and designing approaches to testing to help us assess instructional delivery and mastery of critical thinking more meaningfully. One result is the Monitoring Achievement in Pittsburgh (MAP) program, which ties instruction to a periodic assessment program in all basic skill subjects, including critical thinking. Another is the Syllabus Examination Program (SEP), which links instruction to a series of essay exams. Both, of these programs, already in place in city schools, are designed both to measure student achievement and to give us relevant guidance regarding the effectiveness of our classroom instruction. Educators must, develop more alternatives to the use of multiple-choice testing if we hope to evaluate the instruction of critical thinking in our schools or collect data that will help improve educational outcomes.

—Richard Wallace

Without a clear vision of the meaning of academic success and without the ability to effectively assess student attainment of those achievement targets at the classroom, building, and district levels, we will remain unable to help students attain higher levels of academic achievement, regardless of the instructional methods we use or how we organize our schools.

—Richard J. Stiggins

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection.

—*Northwest Evaluation Association*

Assessment can assist the teacher in planning flexible groups and in determining which children need more instruction—or, conversely, a greater level of challenge—in a particular competency or set of competencies. Because individual children will acquire various competencies at different rates, ongoing assessment is necessary for re-evaluating children's needs and reconstituting flexible groups on a regular basis.

—*Connecticut Department of Education*

Ask these questions to evaluate your school's early literacy assessment procedures:

Is the assessment procedure based on the goals and objectives of the specific curriculum used in the program?

Are the results of assessment used to benefit children; i.e., to plan for individual children, improve instruction, identify children's interests and needs, and individualize instruction, rather than label, track, or fail children?

Does assessment provide useful information to teachers to help them do a better job?

Are teachers the primary assessors, and are they adequately trained for this role?

Are the screening tests used reliable and valid for the purpose for which they are used?

Are the technical adequacies of standardized measures carefully evaluated by knowledgeable professionals?

Is there a systematic procedure for collecting assessment data that facilitates its use in communicating with parents?

—*Connecticut*  
*Department of*  
*Education*

Student evaluation is basic to student growth. It demands careful, thoughtful attention. Yet what typically passes for student evaluation, what fills the public discourse, is an overarching model of assessment, built around a host of standardized tests, that doesn't get particularly close to student learning and doesn't provide teachers with much information of consequence. It is in most settings a wasteful effort that guarantees too many students a limited education and does little to increase public confidence in the schools.

In many schools, teaching to the test has become a significant part of the curriculum. And though the test facsimiles and tricks that such a process comprises may raise test scores, they are hardly the grist for an empowering education. Rising test scores are no longer matters for public celebration because they are not matched by widespread demonstrations of real competence.

—Vito Perrone

Teachers who work day in, day out with students know the students, understand their questions, and can address their growth as learners. Teachers who are deeply involved with their students don't need a test to know how well they read, write, or think.

—David Carroll and  
Patricia Carini

Because teachers spend so much time with children, they have a unique and valuable vantage point for gaining knowledge about their ways of thinking and learning. They can note subtle patterns and continuities that persons outside the classroom, however knowledgeable they may be about children, simply cannot observe. The knowledge that teachers form in this way is relevant to the classroom—because it arises there.

Some educators think only a few truly gifted and dedicated teachers can obtain this kind of knowledge. Their disparaging attitude often leads to a lowest-common-denominator approach to school organization and accountability. In the worst cases, policymakers mandate an overly specific curriculum, and assessment is used as much for checking up on teachers as for monitoring student progress. Assessment usually takes the form of standardized tests that reduce children's efforts as learners to numbers that indicate how many questions each child answered correctly on the day the test was given. These snapshot assessments miss fundamental qualities of human effort and possibility, subtleties of thought, patterns of effort over time, areas of interest or wonder that promote further learning, emerging self-awareness. If we rely on standardized tests to assess student learning, we come away with a distorted view of learning. Teachers can overcome that distortion, however, by using their knowledge of students to conduct their own assessments.

—David Carroll and  
Patricia Carini

Science is an active process that involves using physical skills, imagination, and creativity to tackle the usually ill-defined problems and events of the real world. In looking at our methods for assessing science learning in schools, however, we might think that what's most important in science is being able to choose the one correct answer for each question on a multiple-choice test. Assessing science through multiple-choice tests is like assessing Larry Bird's basketball skills by asking him to respond to a set of multiple-choice questions. We might find out something about Bird's knowledge of the facts of basketball, perhaps even something about his conceptual knowledge, but we certainly would not be able to measure the level of his playing skill.

—George E. Hein

The scene is a familiar one: neatly aligned rows of desks, sharp, yellow No. 2 pencils in the hands of restless students waiting for the seal to be broken on stacks of freshly printed testing booklets. Inevitability permeates the room, as exam booklets are passed, one by one, through the rows. There is a strain of resignation to the teacher's voice as she reads from the scripted text: 'Clean off your desk. Fill in the circles completely. Press down firmly so the computer can read your answer sheets. OK, now begin; you have 20 minutes to complete this portion of the test. Answer the questions to the best of your ability.' The sound of scratching pencils fills the room as students work rapidly to complete analogies, recognize vocabulary words, and make simple calculations. With each question, students pause to select and carefully blacken the circles that punctuate the page. The work is serious, and the stakes are high. For better or worse, these students and this teacher are part of a drama in which all American education participates.

—Rieneke Zessoules and  
Howard Gardner

Because of the standardized test, I have found that my creativity and flexibility as a teacher have been greatly reduced. I spend a great deal of time zeroing in on skills that I know are on the test. This leaves only a bare minimum of opportunity to explore writing and enrichment reading. In reviewing the test I find that what I am going over is the same thing that teachers in one grade lower and one grade higher are covering as well. This makes for a very redundant curriculum. Also, the skills we emphasize before the tests do not help them perform better on a day-to-day basis.

—N. S. Haas, T. M.  
Haladyna, and  
S. B. Nolen

The results of standardized tests become increasingly less valid for low achievers, exactly the group who are most at risk for educational problems and who most need diagnostic testing. Their scores may be contaminated by inappropriate motivation and teaming strategies that further debilitate their performance and affirm a self-fulfilling prophecy of low scores. Apparently in their efforts to decrease personal anxiety and increase the protection of their own self-esteem, they relinquish effort and appropriate strategies on standardized achievement tests.

—S. G. Paris, T. A.  
Lawton, J. C.  
Turner, and J. L.  
Roth

Performance assessment is for probing and prodding the student's mind to reveal what it knows and can do in action.

—Grant Wiggins

We have almost completely neglected classroom assessment in our obsession with standardized testing. Had we not, our path to school improvement would have been far more productive.

—Rick Stiggins

Good tests are tied to clear purposes; our tests should measure what we want them to. We must learn to match many different types of assessments to the many purposes that exist in our classrooms, schools, and districts, for only then can we claim validity.

In the past, testing techniques have not matched their topics and scores have been misused. For decades, educators have administered tests of writing that required, no writing. Students who learned to sort through multiple-choice detractors were assumed to have working knowledge of concepts and problem solving. Conversely, students who were not test-wise, were thought to lack abilities that many of them did, indeed, have in application. Children, schools, and districts have been ranked and placed by measures neither designed nor chosen to be sorting devices.

Alternative assessments offer reasonable testing options. They can be used as classroom-based tools, but they can also be used to measure students against national norms. They can, and will, have the power to drive curriculum and instruction, as do multiple-choice tests. Of course, educators at all levels must design such tests wisely and use them judiciously—according to purposes that have first been established and recognized.

—Greta Nagel

No single measure can provide an accurate picture of a student's cognitive skills; human capabilities are too complex to measure with a single instrument. It follows, then, that multiple instruments should be used—including standardized tests, which, despite their flaws, do provide valuable information.

Standardized tests are invaluable tools in educational, planning, goal setting, and evaluation. They can provide strategic insights into program strengths and weaknesses, helping to pinpoint what is working well and what should be changed. And they provide an easily understood approximation of a student's abilities.

The drawbacks of standardized tests are well-documented, but we should not throw out a valuable measuring tool simply because it is not perfect. The alternative measures suffer from imperfections of their own: they can provide added insight into a student's capabilities for instance, but they cannot measure trends within a school, school district, or state.

Unerring accuracy in human cognitive measurement may be an impossible goal. We can only hope that, by using multiple methods and instruments, we can present a student's abilities as fairly and accurately as possible.

—Edward Wozniak

In national and statewide assessments, performance measures will probably be added to, rather than substituted for, current tests. But in classroom academic departments, and schools, where it perhaps matters most, performance-oriented course designs and assessments can feasibly replace many of today's teaching and testing practices.

We do not need to scrap high academic standards or all forms of standardization as educators learn new assessment skills. To raise academic standards, we can make the criteria for exemplary performances public. Providing performance descriptions and models does more to raise academic standards than publishing percentage scores of right answers to secret questions; it provides guides for instruction and improvement.

In addition, certain elements of performance assessment can be usefully standardized: items to be included in portfolios, processes for designing and mounting exhibitions, and even specific performance opportunities can remain constant from year to year. What cannot be standardized are the pat answers common to most tests today. But that is precisely why performance-based assessments bring important new dimensions to testing programs. They give students room to create, elaborate, demonstrate, and evaluate what they can *do* with what they know.

—David Gibson

Testing programs should be redirected from over-reliance on multiple-choice tests toward alternative forms of assessment. Important decisions about people and institutions should, where feasible, be based on multiple sources of information, especially direct evidence of actual performance in school and on the job. Therefore, candidates, should supply answers, perform acts, demonstrate skills, create products, and supply portfolios.

Test scores are imperfect measures and should not be used alone to make important decisions about individuals, groups, or institutions; past performance and relevant experience must also be considered. Test scores should not be used by themselves to determine kindergarten entry, grade promotion, graduation, or employment opportunities. Furthermore, decision makers' judgements should enter directly into important decisions about people's abilities.

In short, we need to learn how to use multiple sources of information intelligently and sensitively in making decisions.

—Bernard Gifford

It's important to recognize that very subtle changes in tests can have quite a significant impact on the relative performance of different groups. Because of the judgment calls that go into building exams, there is a fundamental squishiness to the results. You can make one small tinker and unwittingly propel girls, or boys, forward on paper, but not in true achievement levels.

—Bob Schaeffer



Formative assessments promote learning when they help students answer three questions: Where am I going? Where am I now? and How can I close the gap?

—Jan Chappuis

As we reflected upon assessment procedures in place in most schools, we realized that students were not involved. It seemed as if assessment were used to police rather than enhance learning. Portfolios involve a partnership between students, parents, and teachers; a partnership centered on empowering students to assess themselves.

—Robert Tierney

In performance assessment, bias occurs when ratings are based on something other than the skill of interest. In other words, there is something in the rater that affects their objectivity. Many times, these things are unconscious. For example, a rater might let handwriting affect how they judge content; or, preconceptions about how well boys and girls write might affect judgements.

Ask:

1. Is some feature of the performance influencing how you judge another feature that is supposed to be independent? (e.g., pet peeves, handwriting,...)
2. Does your knowledge of the type of student performing the task influence your judgements? (e.g., gender, race, perceived attitude,...)
3. Does your knowledge of individual students affect your judgement of *this* performance? (e.g., Susie always does such good work, I'll give her the benefit of the doubt. John always does such bad work, someone else must have done this for him.)

—Judy Arter

The attributes of an instructionally sensitive test are three. First, it measures only a modest number of very significant curricular outcomes. Not a galaxy of content standards, not a plethora of benchmarks, but only a small number of generally significant outcomes. Second, it describes very clearly to a state's teachers, to a state's administrators, what those targets are. So school principals, for example, can guide their staff members in moving toward these clearly defined, very important kinds of outcomes that are measured by the test. Finally, it yields per standard, or per-curricular aim, results for each student. So the teacher can tell whether or not a child has mastered a particular content standard. This allows teachers to improve their instruction.

—W. James Popham

Assessment-related ignorance is the overriding obstacle. It can be seen when a state's educational leaders simply assume that standardized achievement tests, the kinds of tests they've been raised with, since they were kids, are the legitimate way to judge the caliber of learning. Many educators are also willing to accept this short-sighted view because they too are assessment illiterates. Such folks don't understand that traditional standardized achievement tests are wonderful for certain purposes, but when you apply them for other purposes, purposes for which they were not intended, you get distorted results.

This wasn't bad in the past, when instructional quality was not constantly paraded across the stage for public scrutiny. But now, with ...annual report cards of school quality coming out, and penalties for failure to make adequate yearly progress, everyone's going to be looking at results on a state's tests. For state education leaders to continue to use the wrong tests, and thereby ensure that their state's educators will look inept, is simply a function of assessment ignorance.

—W. James Popham

New national tests required by college officials or employers will generally *not* motivate students to work harder in school. I base this belief and my general skepticism about current proposals for new national tests, on historical and comparative experience with education requirements; research on dropout prevention, motivation, and testing; and plain logic. To summarize just one reason why the motivation argument for new tests is a red herring:

Many seemingly strong incentives are already attached to high school graduation. With minor exceptions, people have long had to possess a high school diploma to go on to college, to gain employment that is not fairly menial, or even to join the armed forces of the United States (young people without a high school diploma *can* enter the military, but the alternate entrance requirements are much stiffer). How well has this range of incentives served to motivate students to complete high school? Not terribly well, obviously, as about 25 percent of American students continue to drop out of school before high school graduation. If incentives currently attached to the high school diploma do not motivate these students to come to school (and, after all, seat time is all that some schools require to win a diploma), then it is extremely unlikely that hastily developed new tests doubtful validity, with smaller incentives attached, will motivate students to stay in school or to work hard while there.

—Walt Haney

Any time you talk about an exclusive source of evidence when you're evaluating schools, you know you're wrong. There are a host of things you need to look at to tell whether a school is a winner or a loser. So insofar as you're trying to evaluate the quality of the schools based on...tests, you know you're already in some trouble.

—W. James Popham

There are dramatic examples that demonstrate the motivational power of achievement tests. At Garfield High School in Los Angeles, famous as the setting of the movie *Stand and Deliver*, most students speak English as a second language, come from economically disadvantaged homes—and go to college. Advanced placement tests and classes are widely used at the school to define goals for students and to motivate them. At Rufus King High School in inner-city Milwaukee, half the students are enrolled in courses leading to the International Baccalaureate (IB) examination, an achievement test administered in schools around the world. Graduates from Rufus King who have been through the IB program are attending such highly selective universities as Stanford, Northwestern, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. What's at work here is really quite simple. Students are told what they are expected to learn; they are given opportunities to learn it; and then they are tested to see if they have accomplished the task. The educational process is demystified for them. There are many reasons to have national achievement testing; but even if the only benefits were to clarify expectations and to reward hard work, that would be a convincing argument for such a plan.

—Lynne Cheney

A single test can seldom drive one's desire to learn. Motivation to learn is much more complex.

The use of testing as a motivational technique is based on the premise that external reward is the sole cause for internal motivation. Those who prepose rational testing as the means to motivate students to work harder forget that human beings do not function simply in stimulus-response mode.

There is no single stimulus that motivates all people to respond. Students who take tests well will be the very same students who would be motivated by the test. Yet students who test well are a minority of millions of American students. The apparent intent of using test scores to determine who will be offered future opportunities is to deny them to the majority while perpetuating the success of an elite. No single test score can describe the achievement or project the potential of a person. Colleges and businesses would be better served if they used a variety of measures for determining the capability of prospective students and employees. Many measures, such as classroom performance and teacher recommendations, should be used in combination with standardized test scores.

If we truly believe that *all* children can learn, then we should use many measures to determine the future opportunities for all children. No single test score is so accurate that it can be—or should be—used to shut the door on a child's future.

—LaBarbara Gragg

It makes far more sense to track a population of kids, rather than just a grade level. It's more of an apples-to-apples comparison.

—Thomas Scott

Students can indeed be motivated to greater effort by a national exam, but only if the results of that exam are valued by the larger society. Currently, most employers pay no attention to high school records, and some colleges are willing to admit anyone with a pulse, without regard to demonstrated competencies. Thus, only those students aspiring to the relatively few highly selective colleges have a clear reason for pursuing a rigorous curriculum or doing their very best.

If, however, employers gave priority in hiring and colleges restricted admissions to those who met certain standards on a national exam, students would have a personal, vested interest, to preparing for those exams. Furthermore, if the exams came to be regarded as truly significant, then local school boards, teachers, and parents would become interested both in the results and in what they could do to influence them. If members of the larger society—employers, colleges, communities, schools, teachers, and parents—send a clear message that they value the national exams by the attention they pay to the results, there is no reason to think students will be impervious to that message.

Of course, teachers and schools should constantly seek to stimulate student interest through engaging curriculum and lively instruction. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that many students respond to these motivators with indifference, and we must be prepared to offer external incentives as well. A meaningful national exam will spur students to greater effort in school because they will find it in their best interest to put forth that greater effort.

—Richard DuFour

There was a time in our schools when teachers and administrators seemed quite insensitive to the fact that children differed in ability, aptitude, interests, and therefore in achievement. If a pupil did not learn well, it was assumed that this was a sign that he was lazy and the way to cure that was by application of the rod. Today we know that children do differ in almost every conceivable way and that these individual differences, very large in some cases, have much to do with school achievement as well as personal adjustment, and success in school as well as out. Modern tests and testing procedures have done much to bring out the fact of such differences and to quantify them. That is, tests not only reveal that the differences exist but also tell us their extent or size.

—J. Wayne Wrightstone

In some schools, tracking begins with kindergarten screening. IQ and early achievement tests designed to measure so-called ‘ability’ determine track placement in the elementary years, thus setting in place an educational trajectory for 12 years of schooling.

—Carol Corbett Burris  
and Delia T.  
Garrity

## **12 SUGGESTIONS FOR USING CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE-BASED TESTS**

### **Designing tests**

1. Have a clear purpose in mind for the assessment; ask yourself how you will use the results.
2. Devise tasks directly related to instructional goals that require students to apply what they've learned.
3. Use tasks that have more than one correct answer or outcome.
4. Use tasks that require more than one step to complete.
5. Consider asking students to design their own question, problem, or project.

### **Administering tests**

6. Have students complete the assessment task during their regularly scheduled class time. More complex tasks may take a number of class periods and might include out-of class work also. For such assignments students should keep a log of their progress.
7. Identify check points at which you record pupil progress. This gives you a more comprehensive picture of a student's performance and enables you to diagnose weaknesses. Specify clearly what the student is to do and under what conditions.

### **Scoring tests**

8. Avoid mental record keeping as you may forget important information about a student's performance. Relying on memory can also result in your perceptions being filtered as you observe subsequent students.
9. Decide whether holistic or analytic scoring is appropriate based on your purpose for the evaluation.
10. Establish scoring criteria prior to test administration.
11. Decide on a method of recording scores and prepare the necessary materials such as a checklist or rating scale.
12. Refer to a written copy of the scoring criteria when evaluating a student's performance.

—Richard J. Stiggins

Many high school students are under so much competitive pressure. They are sometimes taught that if they don't have a 4.0 GPA, score in the 99th percentile on admissions tests, and demonstrate leadership in sports and participate in clubs, they won't get into college anywhere. Even highly credentialed professionals get caught up in this.

—Elizabeth Thornton

Those who promote ability grouping, special education, gifted programs, and the myriad other homogeneous instructional groups in schools claim that these classifications are objective and color blind, rather than, as Goodlad suggests, reflecting myths and prejudices. Advocates of grouping explain the disproportionate classification of white students as gifted or advanced and of students of color as slow or basic as the unfortunate consequence of different backgrounds and abilities. They base their claims of objectivity on century-old (and older) explanations of differences that are neither scientific nor bias-free.

Both students and adults mistake labels such as ‘gifted,’ ‘honors student,’ ‘average,’ ‘remedial,’ ‘LD’ and ‘MMR’ for certification of overall ability or worth. These labels teach students that if the school does not identify them as capable in earlier grades, they should not expect to do well later. Everyone without the ‘gifted’ label has the de facto label of ‘not gifted.’ The resource classroom is a low status place and students who go there are low status students. The result of all this is that most students have needlessly low self-concepts and schools have low expectations. Few students or teachers can defy those identities and expectations. These labeling effects permeate the entire school and social culture.

—Jeannie Oakes and  
Martin Lipton

From the day a child enters kindergarten, he/she is screened, classified, grouped, tracked, promoted/not promoted, and labeled according to his/her performance on standardized tests. Standardized test scores for schools and school districts are often published in the newspapers and can affect the results of mill levy votes. Most colleges and universities give importance to standardized test scores as a criterion for admission. Test results underlie decisions about a child throughout school life. Often these decisions (academic tracking, for example) are irreversible.

—Sharon Koenigs

A student’s performance on a standardized test may reflect more than just his/her knowledge of the content. Other factors influence test performance. These include a student’s physical health, emotional state, motivation at the time of testing, out-of-school learning, learning in previous classes, and his/her intelligence. In addition, his/her test-taking sophistication and test-wiseness play a significant role in determining the final score. Students in good health, physically and emotionally, who are motivated, and have experience in test taking, score considerably higher on tests than students lacking these attributes.

—Sharon Koenigs

The SAT allows less-privileged students access to universities that previously were the bastions of the wealthy.

—Eliot Schrefer

To be effective, instruction in test-taking must begin well in advance of the actual testing date and can take anywhere from five to twenty or more hours. In general, the more intensive the practice, the more dramatic the results. However, a few hours of training, spaced over a week or two, is more helpful than no training at all. It is recommended (for all grade levels) that training begin no later than six weeks prior to the actual testing date. Total training time should be no less than six hours, or at least one hour per week for six weeks. Again, more is better. (Do not think that spending this much time on test-taking skills is unfair or improper. Many school districts require teachers to spend this amount of time on test-taking skills. Since norm-referenced tests compare students, failure to spend as much time on these skills as do other schools puts the student at a disadvantage.) Test-taking skills are not a substitute for good study skills or content mastery. Students should be absolutely clear on this point. If students ‘ease off on their study because of newly acquired test-taking skills, test scores are likely to decrease.

—Sharon Koenigs

Youngsters come to school with a variety of experience in following verbal instructions, completing worksheets, and marking answers. Experience comes from preschool and/or a home environment in which these activities are encouraged and supported. Some youngsters come to school with little or no experience of this kind and are completely baffled by their first standardized testing experience. Providing students with practice in test taking can have a dramatic effect on test scores. A few hours of practice and instruction can make the difference between a score of ‘zero’ and a score much, closer to, or even above, the norm.

—Sharon Koenigs

A program in test-taking skills for students in grades seven through twelve can be thought of as a more sophisticated review of all the skills taught in the earlier grades. There are a few strategies that only older students can make use of, but, for the most part, the really important skills are still those basics learned in the primary and intermediate grades. This does not mean, however, that secondary students cannot benefit from instruction in test-taking. Carelessness, lack of attention to detail, and basic misunderstanding about the purpose of testing and the use of test results can be costly in terms of raw score points on any standardized test.

—Sharon Koenigs

Grades are almost completely relative, in effect ranking students relative to others in their class. Thus extra achievement by one student not only raises his position, but in effect lowers the position of others.

—James S. Coleman

Students don't know who Mark Twain was because he wasn't on the test.

—Kinky Friedman

The SAT plays an important role in helping admissions officers around the country sort out students, well-deserving students from 20,000 high schools that have different curriculums, different grading standards, and different ability to help students get ready for college.

—Jonathan Grayer

'Will this be in the examination, Mr Hecker?' was the limit of my students' interest in any given subject. If it was going to be in the test they took notes, if it was not going to be in the test they did not take notes. Their silent, depthless stares were unnerving. I told myself that they were not stupid—for how could the final attainment of thousands of years of human progress be stupid?

—Tod Wodicka

... test scores and measures of achievement tell you where a student is, but they don't tell you where a student could end up.

—Carol S. Dweck

You don't really need to be intelligent to be a 'top student.' All that you have to do is to forget the least in an exam.

—Mokokoma  
Mokhonoana

Food comas—known as postprandial somnolence by people who liked to get bean up during recess—are fine when you're relaxing with friends or family, but they're a major setback when you have exams and papers to write.

—Stefanie Weisman

As you can see, I have memorized this utterly useless piece of information long enough to pass a test question. I now intend to forget it forever. You've taught me nothing except how to cynically manipulate the system. Congratulations.

—Bill Watterson

One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind for the examinations, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect on me that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.

—Albert Einstein



Wisdom is nothing more than confirmed imagination: just because one did not study for his exam does not mean that he should leave it blank.

—Criss Jami

Until that moment, it hadn't occurred to me that my grades and test scores over the years were anything more than individual humiliations; I hadn't realized that one day all of them would add up and count against me.

—Melissa Bank

One of the most significant consequences of the proliferation of tests over the last decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st has been this tendency of assessment to direct the curriculum. Like a huge magnet, assessment drags curriculum toward it. It should, of course, even if we accept the need for tests, be the other way round: the curriculum should be shaped independent of any consideration of tests: tests should be constructed and administered in another space, both literally and metaphorically, hermetically sealed not only from the teacher's gaze but also – and even more importantly—from the teacher's consideration.

In practice, though, this never happens. It is inevitable that if you decide regularly to test children's performance on the curriculum, and if, furthermore, you make teacher's careers and school's futures depend on the result, the tests will very quickly come to dominate what is taught. Not only the content, but also the style and manner of the teaching will be influenced by the tests. Teaching will be about getting the right answer, irrespective of understanding.

—Gary Thomas

Over recent years, [there's been] a strong tendency to require assessment of children and teachers so that [teachers] have to teach to tests and the test determines what happens to the child, and what happens to the teacher...that's guaranteed to destroy any meaningful educational process: it means the teacher cannot be creative, imaginative, pay attention to individual students' needs, that a student can't pursue things [...] and the teacher's future depends on it as well as the students'...the people who are sitting in the offices, the bureaucrats designing this—they're not evil people, but they're working within a system of ideology and doctrines, which turns what they're doing into something extremely harmful [...] the assessment itself is completely artificial; it's not ranking teachers in accordance with their ability to help develop children who reach their potential, explore their creative interests and so on [...] you're getting some kind of a 'rank,' but it's a 'rank' that's mostly meaningless, and the very ranking itself is harmful. It's turning us into individuals who devote our lives to achieving a rank, not into doing things that are valuable and important.

It's highly destructive...in, say, elementary education, you're training kids this way [...] I can see it with my own children: when my own kids were in elementary school (at what's called a good school, a good-quality suburban school), by the time they were in third grade, they were dividing up their friends into 'dumb' and 'smart.' You had 'dumb' if you were lower-tracked, and 'smart' if you were upper-tracked [...] it's just extremely harmful and has nothing to do with education. Education is developing your own potential and creativity. Maybe you're not going to do well in school, and you'll do great in art; that's fine. It's another way to live a fulfilling and wonderful life, and one that's significant for other people as well as yourself. The whole idea is wrong in itself; it's creating something that's called 'economic man': the 'economic man' is somebody who rationally calculates how to improve his/her own status, and status means (basically) wealth. So you rationally calculate what kind of choices you should make to increase your wealth—don't pay attention to anything else—or maybe maximize the amount of goods you have.

What kind of a human being is that? All of these mechanisms like testing, assessing, evaluating, measuring...they force people to develop those characteristics. The ones who don't do it are considered, maybe, 'behavioral problems' or some other deviance [...] these ideas and concepts have consequences. And it's not just that they're ideas, there are huge industries devoted to trying to instill them...the public relations industry, advertising, marketing, and so on. It's a huge industry, and it's a propaganda industry. It's a propaganda industry designed to create a certain type of human being: the one who can maximize consumption and can disregard his actions on others. It's massive, and it starts with infants.

—Noam Chomsky

Nothing important in this world is measured by grades. Intelligence, character, integrity, success, happiness—do you want these things, or do you want to struggle with the arbitrary difference between an A minus and a B plus?

—Ryan Quinn

Now it makes sense, for example, if the children are taking a vocabulary test of 100 words, and one of the kids misses thirteen of them, to give him an 87 percent. But we go far beyond this. A student writes an essay on a sunset, let us say, and the teacher writes 87 percent at the top of that paper. What he is saying, in effect, is that there is a mathematical metaphor operative here. The figure of 87 is to 100 what this submitted essay is . . . to what? What on earth is this supposed to mean?

—Douglas Wilson

When students cheat on exams it's because our school system values grades more than students value learning.

—Neil deGrasse Tyson

What are the purposes of examinations anyhow? Are they to increase our educational attainment? Or are they instruments used to bring suffering and humiliation and deep hurt to a person who is trying so hard to succeed?"

—Virginia M. Axline

The trouble with school is they give you the answer, then they give you the exam. That's not life.

—Ziad K. Abdelnour

I wanted to capture what language ability tests could never reveal: her intent, her passion, her imagery, the rhythms of her speech and the nature of her thoughts.

—Amy Tan

Testing is not a substitute for curriculum and instruction. Good education cannot be achieved by a strategy of testing children, shaming educators, and closing schools.

—Diane Ravitch

Results from the *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking* in 2011 found that American children's scores have declined steadily across the past decade or more. The data show that children have become: less emotionally expressive, less energetic, less talkative and verbally expressive, less humorous, less imaginative, less unconventional, less lively and passionate, less perceptive, less apt to connect seemingly irrelevant things, less synthesizing, and less likely to see things from a different angle. The largest drop has been in the measure of 'elaboration,' or the ability to take an idea and expand on it in a novel way.

--Kyung-Hee Kim

All students take tests, but the most difficult challenge of all may be the test of one's will, one's courage, and one's self-esteem when confronted by a bully.

—Dan L. Miller

I have learned that, although I am a good teacher, I am a much better student, and I was blessed to learn valuable lessons from my students on a daily basis. They taught me the importance of teaching to a student—and not to a test.

—Erin Gruwell

Korean students are hard working, talented, and they do what they need to do. They succeed in exams. They are highly motivated to succeed in tests.

—Dan Shechtman

You don't really need to be intelligent to be a 'top student.' All that you have to do is to forget the least in an exam.

—Mokokoma  
Mokhonoana

Educators often consider recreational reading to be an effective method of connecting to students' emotional and developmental needs. This 'warm and fuzzy' conception of reading has been recently overshadowed by the realization that recreational reading has a number of other benefits. For example, time spent reading correlates with academic success, vocabulary development, standardized-test performance, improved attitudes toward additional reading and the development of world knowledge.

--Thomas W. Bean

What do teachers and curriculum directors mean by 'value' reading? A look at the practice of most schools suggests that when a school 'values' reading what it really means is that the school intensely focuses on raising state-mandated reading test scores- the kind of reading our students will rarely, if ever, do in adulthood.

—Kelly Gallagher

We are in a time, because of the proliferation of online media and a hundred channels on cable, where teenagers and young adults and eight- and nine-year-olds do not read enough. And the SAT is very unforgiving for students who do not read.

—Jonathan Grayer

In Japanese schools, the students don't get ANY exams until they reach grade four (the age of 10)! Why?

Because the goal for the first 3 years of schools is NOT to judge the child's knowledge or learning, but to establish good manners and to develop their character!

Yes, that's what our scholars taught us: Manners BEFORE knowledge!

Should this method be implemented all over the world?

—Unknown

As a young professor I would set up a test where I'd ask men and women how they thought they were going to do on a variety of tasks. Men consistently overestimated their abilities and subsequent performance, and the women routinely underestimated both. The actual performances did not differ in quality. It is one of the most consistent findings you can have.

--Brenda Major

What are the purposes of examinations anyhow? Are they to increase our educational attainment? Or are they instruments used to bring suffering and humiliation and deep hurt to a person who is trying so hard to succeed?

—Virginia M. Axline

The high IQ has become the American equivalent of the Legion of Honor, positive proof of a child's intellectual aristocracy...It has become more important to be a smart kid than a good kid or even a healthy kid.

—Sam Levenson

In my opinion, defining intelligence is much like defining beauty, and I don't mean that it's in the eye of the beholder. To illustrate, let's say that you are the only beholder, and your word is final. Would you be able to choose the 1000 most beautiful women in the country? And if that sounds impossible, consider this: Say you're now looking at your picks. Could you compare them to each other and say which one is more beautiful? For example, who is more beautiful—Katie Holmes or Angelina Jolie? How about Angelina Jolie or Catherine Zeta-Jones? I think intelligence is like this. So many factors are involved that attempts to measure it are useless. Not that IQ tests are useless. Far from it. Good tests work: They measure a variety of mental abilities, and the best tests do it well. But they don't measure intelligence itself.

—Marilyn Vos Savant

If you are prepared, then you are able to feel confident.

—Robert J. Ringer

Blogging is a great tool for undertaking assignments. If you encourage students to write a blog post every week over the course of a six-week project, both you and they have a record of what they learned, and how their project and their thinking developed. It's a way of maintaining a project record without the associated boredom....That would have had the additional advantage of making it easy for parents and the principal to see why they'd been doing.

—Terry Freedman

The single biggest predictor of high academic achievement and high ACT scores is reading to children. Not flash cards, not workbooks, not fancy preschools, not blinking toys or computers, but Mom or Dad taking the time every day or night (or both) to sit and read them wonderful books.

—*First Grade Fun Times*

We need to allow our children to fail, because struggle builds resilience and grit.

--Liza Mundy

Not only is the idea of that American test scores were once higher a fiction, but in some cases they have actually improved over time, especially among African American students. Since the early 1970s, when the *Department of Education* began collecting long-term data, average reading and math scores for 9- and 13-year-olds have risen significantly.

—Erika Christakis

There is no clear connection between test scores and a nation's economic success. Surely it's reasonable to ask whether some of America's success might derive not from factors measured by standardized tests, but from other attributes of our educational system. U.S. public schools, at their best, have encouraged a unique mixing of diverse people, and produced an exceptionally innovative and industrious citizenry.

—Erika Christakis

I was in that part of the class that made the top half possible.

—Zig Ziglar

Students in school cheat not to get the 'A,' but to avoid the 'C.'

—Charles Duhigg

McAfee, the online security software maker, conducted an online survey of 1,201 U.S. high school students in grades 9-12 last June and found mobile devices are too great a cheating temptation for many students to ignore. One in three kids in the U.S. use cellphones or other devices to cheat. In addition, six in 10 teens have seen or know another teen who used a connected device in class to cheat on an exam or quiz.

—*Tech & Learning* (2018)

An adolescent becomes an adult when he thinks it is more important to pass an exam than to pass the car ahead.

--Unknown

Design tests that encourage the kind of learning you want students to achieve. Many students will learn whatever is necessary to get the grades they desire. If you base your tests on memorizing details, students will focus on memorizing facts. If your tests stress the synthesis and evaluation of information, students will be motivated to practice those skills when they study.

—Wilbert J.  
McKeachie

Half the people in the world are below average.

—Unknown

Reverse the test-taking, if tests must be administered. Produce a test where the answers are all given but the questions are missing. It's the students' responsibility to produce the questions on the test, not the answers.

—Jane Christensen

My roommates and their classmates are burning & sacrificing an animal cracker to pray for their Greek final to be canceled. A snackrifice.

—Anna Borges

The most frustrating thing about multiple choice tests is that you are literally, actually looking right at the correct answer but you just don't know which one it is.

—Anna Borges

Failing a test is usually an indicator of how bad a student is doing, but it can also be an indicator of how bad the teacher is doing.

—Internet Meme

- The number of books in a home is a significant predictor of academic achievement.
- Little more than one-third of high school seniors now read proficiently.
- Voluntary readers are better readers and writers than non-readers.
- Children and teenagers who read for pleasure on a daily or weekly basis score better on reading tests than infrequent readers.
- Frequent readers also score better on writing tests than non-readers or infrequent readers.

—Sunil Iyengar  
Director, Research  
& Analysis  
*National  
Endowment for the  
Arts*

When I die I want all the people I worked with on group projects to lower me in the ground to let me down one last time.

—Internet Meme

Nationally, 75 percent of all high school students cheat. But the ones who cheat more are the ones who have the most to lose, which is the honors and AP (advanced placement) students. Eighty percent of honors and AP students cheat on a regular basis....For kids with a very high GPA and very high SAT scores, who have taken a ton of AP classes, what distinguishes them is how perfect they are. So there's no room for any kind of error. And if there's no room for error, you tend to cheat, even though these students would have done just fine on the test. They say they cheat because 'this is my safety net.'

—Denise Pope

The pressure to succeed at all costs has boosted cheating levels in college to record levels also. A graduate of San Francisco's independent Urban School, whom we'll call Ellen, now a junior at the University of Southern California, says, 'Everyone cheats. There is no cushion, so you have to do well; there isn't a choice. In college, there is no room for error. You cannot fail. You refuse to fail. People become desperate, so they'll do anything to do well. That's why people resort to paying others to do their papers. Because you feel: Mess up once and you are screwed. The end.'

Tests are a big part of the grade in college, she says, and those are largely multiple-choice, which were a rude shock to someone coming from a progressive high school. 'It's just memorization,' says Ellen. 'I came from Urban, where I was taught to bask in the glory of learning something, not to just sit down the night before with a bunch of kids on Adderall and go through the 30-page study guide and memorize as much as I can. And you can say that taking a drug to stay up so you can study is another form of cheating.'

—Regan McMahon

...the widespread use by high school and college student of the drugs Adderall and Ritalin, normally prescribed to kids diagnosed with attention deficit disorder. Students without the disorder find them easy to obtain legally (college students often use the phrase 'I'm having a little trouble focusing' at the campus health center to get a prescription) or illegally from students sharing their prescription or selling pills for profit. Ellen says some college students will trade marijuana for Adderall. Pope says use of stimulants is on the rise in high school, and more and more kids are using them to take the SAT. As in the debate over the use of steroids in sports, some students don't feel it's morally wrong—because it's still your brain at work—and are ignoring the health risks of taking a drug not meant for them, with no monitoring of dosage or side effects by a doctor....It was No-Doz and caffeine. Now, especially in the past five years, it has switched to Adderall, Ritalin and illegal stimulants.



A lot of students' philosophy is 'Cheat or be cheated.' So many of their friends are cheating, they figure they'd be a chump not to. 'If you're the one honest kid, you're actually going to get the lower grades or the lower test scores.'

—Denise Pope

But even if kids are not aware of cheating scandals like Enron, they are absolutely influenced by the role models they see close to them. So when they see their parent go 'diagnosis shopping' to get a doctor to say they have ADD so they can have extra time to complete their SAT test, or they hear a coach tell them to fake an injury in football when their team is out of time-outs to gain an unofficial one, kids get the message that it's OK, even necessary, to do take whatever steps to gain an advantage. And to an adolescent that may translate as lie, cheat and steal.

—Denise Pope

There are a few steps schools could take that don't cost any money, that would cut the incidence of cheating in school testing by two-thirds in one year: Don't give the same test over and over again, separate kids so they don't see each other's papers, make it clear to students that it is unacceptable, have them sign a document that says they haven't cheated and punish cheaters. Also, don't let them come into tests with PDAs and cell phones.

—Micael Josephson

### **TOP 5 WAYS TO CHEAT**

- Copying from another student
- Plagiarizing by downloading information or whole papers from the Internet
- Cell phone cheating—text-messaging answers to another student, taking a picture of the test and e-mailing it to another student, or downloading information from the Internet
- Getting test questions, answers or a paper from a student in a previous period or from a previous year
- Bringing a permitted graphing calculator into the test loaded with answer material previously input into the computer portion of the calculator

### **TOP 5 WAYS TO CURB CHEATING**

- Create an honor code with student input so they're invested in it
- Seriously punish cheaters according the academic integrity policy
- Create multiple versions of tests to make purloined answer keys useless
- Ban electronic devices in testing rooms

-- Develop multiple modes of assessment so the grade is not determined primarily on tests

—Regan McMahon

Think twice before you give a surprise test—and consider two factors carefully when you do. First, analyze the validity of the test you have created. Second, be careful about weighting it too heavily. It's far better to give a 'positive test'. To help prepare students than it is to make the mistake of giving a surprise test which is poorly written or heavily weighted. And it's hard to be regarded as fair or caring if you do either.

—Robert L. DeBruyn

Students watch every procedure used in the grading process very carefully. They talk to one another and compare notes to see who earned what grade on each and every assignment. When you give students a deadline on an assignment, make a note of those students who turn their work in on time. Even if you extend the deadline, those who meet your original date should be rewarded. It's very upsetting to a student when he or she hands work in on time and gets a B, then sees a classmate hand it in days later and get an A. Your credibility with students will suffer when this happens. And you'll find that the next time you set a deadline for students, you won't get the cooperation you desire.

—Robert L. DeBruyn

Reduce test anxiety by making the first question easy, increasing the font size, and going over directions with the students before they begin. Grade with the green pen, not a red pen.

—Marty Applebaum

It's always advantageous, of course, to mark daily assignments as well as tests in such a way that grading encourages and motivates the student. And we all know there is nothing that encourages a student to keep trying as much as some success. For this reason, do not always mark every wrong answer. Rather, consider marking every right answer. Sometimes, you may even consider marking nothing on the paper except the notation, 'Five mistakes. Find them and correct each one for each grade of B on this paper.'

—Robert L. DeBruyn

Isn't it wild that the ballots from all 50 states can be counted in one night but my professors can't get my scantron graded for 2 weeks.

—Internet Meme

## **THE PURPOSE OF GRADES**

There are many purposes for using grades in the school program. Grades provide incentives to learn for many students. Most students are motivated to attain the highest grades and to receive the recognition that often accompanies such grades, and they are motivated to avoid the lowest grades and the negative outcomes that sometimes are associated with those grades. Grades also provide information to students for self-evaluation, for analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and for creating a general impression of academic promise, all of which may enter into educational planning. Finally, grades are used to communicate students' performance levels to others who want to know about past achievement or want to forecast future academic success. Teachers in subsequent classes use grades in these ways. The most recognized purpose of grades, however, is to communicate the achievement status of students to their parents. The grade, then, symbolizes the extent to which a student has attained the important instructional goals of the reporting period for which the grade is assigned.

—Dan L. Miller

## **GRADING ON THE CURVE**

The curve referred to in the name of this method is the normal, bell-shaped curve that is often used to describe the achievements of individuals in a large heterogeneous group. The idea behind this method is that the grades in a class should follow a normal distribution, or one nearly like it. Under this assumption, the teacher determines the percentage of students who should be assigned each grade symbol so that the distribution is normal in appearance. For example, the teacher may decide that the percentages of A through F grades in the class should be distributed as follows:

6% of the students will receive an A  
22% of the students will receive an B  
44% of the students will receive an C  
22% of the students will receive an D  
6% of the students will receive an F

Grading on the curve is a simple method to use, but it has serious drawbacks. The fixed percentages are nearly always determined arbitrarily, and the percentages do not account for the possibility that some classes are superior and others are inferior relative to the phantom 'typical' group the percentages are intended to represent. Grading on a curve also takes all incentive away from lower-performing students. They soon realize that their grades have little to do with how well they master course content. They must 'beat' higher-performing students to succeed. No matter

how hard they work, their performance will always be evaluated relative to that of higher-performing students.

The use of the normal curve to measure student achievement in a single classroom is simply inappropriate and is not to be used.

—Dan L. Miller

There are many (very important!) things that tests just can't accurately measure. For example:

A test can't measure the compassion that shines in the eyes of a child caring for a chick that has fallen from its nest.

A test can't measure the generosity shown by a boy who gives his birthday money to the homeless man on the corner.

A test can't measure the creativity that has been poured into every priceless piece of artwork that hangs on the refrigerator.

A test can't measure the joy a little girl feels while slow dancing on her daddy's feet in the living room after dinner.

A test can't measure the determination it takes for a child with dyslexia to complete just one reading assignment.

A test can't measure the love that is wrapped up in the warmth of a child's embrace.

Children everywhere deserve to know this: **YOU ARE NOT YOUR TEST SCORE.** You are so much more.

—*blog.allaboutlearningpress.com*

An 89% versus a 90% on a test is like the difference between 5'11 and 6 feet for dating.

—*theChive*

Data from *The College Board* show that in 2015, students who took four years of arts and music classes while in high school (only 18 percent of test-takers) scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who took only one-half year or less (16 percent of test takers). Scores of 1077 vs. 985, respectively.

—*americansforthearts.org*

'Man, I got a 44% on my bio exam.'

'A 44? I thought you said you did good.'

'Nah, I said I FELT good.'

—*@overheardnewyork*

Young adolescents do not just want friendly peer relationship, they want respectful, collaborative, and equitable relationships. They want to feel psychologically safe, they want others to also feel safe, and they are seeking adult assistance in securing such safety. In the current educational milieu, with heightened attention to student achievement as measured by standardized tests, many middle level schools are choosing to devote less rather than more time to the affective dimension of school life. Packaged anti-bullying programs are not what these middle schoolers are asking for. Instead, they are asking for the quality of human exchange in schools and classrooms to be more democratic, humane, and respectful.

— Nancy Doda & Trudy Knowles

All the emphasis on high-stakes testing has squeezed out time for guidance, the time that teachers can take to impart the usefulness and meaning of the skills they teach, activities like writing for the school newspaper or join the French club. Not every kid is going to find meaning in the three R's. We are single-mindedly focusing on test scores as if the test scores in and of themselves are some kind of important goal for education.

—William Damon

We require them to follow rigid rules and, in schools particularly, we cause children to learn in ways which are the very antithesis of actual learning. We force them to remember and regurgitate large quantities of rote-remembered facts for certain rituals that we call 'examinations,' and those who have the highest disgorgitive capacities are considered the most intelligent and the most brilliant and so are the most highly rewarded.

—Ashley Montagu

This the philosophy I am trying to change—the philosophy, inherent in much of our education, that if you fail a child that will cause him to buckle down and work hard; it will make a new man of him. It just doesn't work that way. Most of us...know that all you learn from failing is how to fail. And in our schools we are teaching many, many children how to fail.

—William Glasser

Between standardized testing and a culture of achievement, today's youth can feel pressure to succeed in ways previous generations did not.

A survey done every year by *Higher Education Research* asks incoming college freshmen if they feel overwhelmed by all they have to do.

In 2016, 41% of students said 'yes' compared with 28% in 2000 and 18% in 1985.

—Dr. Claire McCarthy

Parents paid for fixers to assist with, and in some cases to take, tests for students to ensure a ‘Goldilocks’ score for their preferred school—not too low to shut them out but not too high to raise suspicions. Add these crimes to other recent SAT testing scandals in Asia and the Harvard University discrimination lawsuits and it becomes clear this anachronistic assessment system need to go away—sooner rather than later.

—Kevin Hogan

[Keith] Lance, [Marcia] Rodney, and [Christine] Hamilton-Pennell [2005] found a positive correlation between more collaborative library staffs and higher ACT scores. According to their research, when the library staff spends more time identifying materials for teachers, planning with teachers, motivating students to read, co-teaching, serving on school committees, and meeting with librarians from other schools or districts, ‘ACT scores increase an average of three to four percent over the scores for schools with less collaborative library staff.’

—Rebecca Molineaux

I failed everything but a pregnancy test.

—*theChive*

Higher standardized test scores in reading are correlated with school libraries that have higher staffing levels, larger and more current book collections, better funding, and more computers.

—K. C. Lance, C.  
Hamilton-Pennell,  
and M. J. Rodney

Tonight, she sat and watched her father correct papers until it was time for her to go to bed. The light of the study lamp circled his head with a crown of brightness and the vicious little red marks he made on the papers were the color of the blood that oozed out in a thin line the day she cut her finger with the bread knife.

—Sylvia Plath

Standardized tests are the gatekeepers to keep people out, and I know exactly who’s at the bottom. It is torturous for black, Latino, and low-income children, because they will never catch up, due to institutionalized racism.

—New York Public High  
School Parent

My teacher thinks the word ‘test’ is too harsh, so instead she tells us we’re having a ‘celebration of knowledge.’ It’s never a celebration.

—*Buzzfeed*

High school teachers: College exams are really important and super hard! You have to make time to actually study!!

An actual question that I just had on my final exam:

30. Answer 'A' so we have an even 30 questions.

a. Correct

b. Not this one.

c. Answer A, Please

d. B, C, and D are wrong. Bubble in 'A' for questions 30.

—@bethwatkinss

High school me: A's gets ya paid.

College me: Fuck it, C's & D's gets degrees.

—@gmfduke1

If school results were the key to power, girls would be running the world.

—Sarah Boseley

If I were asked to enumerate the educational stupidities, the giving of grades would head the list...if I can't give a child a better reason for studying than studying for a grade on a report card, I ought to lock my desk and go home and stay there.

—Dorothy DeZouche

Labels belong on cans, not people.

—Vicki Caruana

Brilliance depends on who's writing the test.

—Garrison Keillor

I don't know who needs to hear this, but you're not a failure because you got C in pre-calc!

—Kelly Martinez

You cannot get educated by this self-propagating system in which people study to pass exams, and teach others to pass exams, but nobody knows anything. You learn something by doing it yourself, by asking questions, by thinking, and by experimenting.

—Richard Feynman

There is accumulation of research evidence going back about [90] years which shows the value of the pretest in building positive attitudes in the children...and resulting in high...achievement. In fact, finding out what the learner already knows before teaching is a teaching principle that is many years old—in all subject areas. The evidence from...research very definitely shows its importance and truth.

—Walter Perry

Elementary education...values relatively superficial learning that's too focused on achieving mastery of shallow (but test-friendly) skills unmoored from real content knowledge or critical thinking. School hours are marked by disruptions and noise as students shift, mostly en masse and in age-stratified groups, from one strictly demarcated topic or task to another. Many educators and child-development experts believe that some of the still-standard features of pre-K and elementary education—age and ability cohorts, short classroom periods, confinement mostly indoors—are not working of many children.

—Erika Christakis (2020)

Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked.

—John Dewey

Schools teach you to imitate. If you don't imitate what the teacher wants you get a bad grade. Here, in college, it was more sophisticated, of course; you were supposed to imitate the teacher in such a way as to convince the teacher you were not imitating, but taking the essence of the instruction and going ahead with it on your own. That got you A's. Originality on the other hand could get you anything—from A to F. The whole grading system cautioned against it.

—Robert M. Pirsig

Never compare one student's test score to another's. Always measure a child's progress against her past performance. There will always be a better reader, mathematician, or baseball player. Our goal is to help each student become as special as she can be as an individual--not to be more special than the kid sitting next to her.

—Rafe Esquith

In the age of standardized testing, thinking and acting, reason and judgment have been thrown out the window just as teachers are increasingly being deskilled and forced to act as semi-robotic technicians good for little more than teaching for the test.

—Henry A. Giroux



I couldn't see how anyone could be educated by this self-propagating system in which people pass exams, and teach others to pass exams, but nobody knows anything.

—Richard Feynman

It's tempting, when students are given some kind of assessment, to assume the results primarily reveal how much progress each kid is, or isn't making—rather than noticing that the quality of the teaching is also being assessed.

—Alfie Kohn

It is especially important for teachers in heterogeneous classes to alter traditional grading practices to take into account students' starting points and to set specific, quantitative goals for each student. The idea is to create individual goals that are both challenging and reachable.

—Douglas MacIver and  
David Reuman

We have always known that human development is inextricably linked with academic development, but in a time in history where we are putting so much emphasis on testing and academic achievement, we risk losing sight of something that is very obvious: Achievement is as much about student development as it is about rigor and curriculum.

—Peter Benson

Students are more likely to put forth the required effort when there is:

- Task clarity—when they clearly understand the learning goal and know how teachers will evaluate their learning.
- Relevance—when they think the learning goals and assessments are meaningful and worth learning.
- Potential for success—when they believe they can successfully learn and meet the evaluative expectations.

—Robert Marzano

Use grading rubrics. Students will usually rise to your level of expectation. If you show them clearly what you expect, you are much more likely to get it. You might try one teacher's grading scale—Outstanding, Great and Not There Yet. Students who receive this last grade will have a chance to try again to meet a high standard.

—Barbara R. Blackburn

Use tests in a positive way. The best tests give students a chance to show what they have learned. They also show teachers what they may need to reteach. As often as possible, tell students in advance what you plan to cover on the test. Also give them a chance to practice with any unfamiliar types of questions.

—Gregory J. Cizek

Be serious and attentive during testing. Most teachers wouldn't dream of leaving the room during a test. But if you sit at your desk grading papers, you are mentally absent. Circulate through the room. You will also gather helpful information about what seems to be causing problems for students.

—Gregory J. Cizek

As long as you are learning, you are not failing.

—Bob Ross

Talk to your child about testing. It's helpful for children to understand why schools give tests and to know the different kinds of tests they will take.

Explain that tests are yardsticks that teachers, schools, school districts and even states use to measure what and how they teach and how well students are learning what is taught. Most tests are designed and given by teachers to measure students' progress in a course. These tests are associated with the grades on report cards. The results tell the teacher and students whether they are keeping up with the class, need extra help or are ahead of other students.

The results of some tests tell schools that they need to strengthen courses or change teaching methods. Still other tests compare students by schools, school districts or cities. All tests determine how well a child is doing in the areas measured by the tests.

Tell your child that occasionally, he will take 'standardized' tests. Explain that these tests use the same standards to measure student performance across the state or even across the country. Every student takes the same test according to the same rules. This makes it possible to measure each student's performance against that of others.

—*U. S. Department of  
Education*

## **WHAT PURPOSES DO GRADES SERVE?**

The multiple roles that grades serve:

- as an evaluation of student work;
- as a means of communicating to students, parents, graduate schools, professional schools, and future employers about a student's performance in college and potential for further success;

- as a source of motivation to students for continued learning and improvement;
- as a means of organizing a lesson, a unit, or a semester in that grades mark transitions in a course and bring closure to it.

Additionally, grading provides students with feedback on their own learning, clarifying for them what they understand, what they don't understand, and where they can improve. Grading also provides feedback to instructors on their students' learning, information that can inform future teaching decisions.

—Barbara Walvoord and  
Virginia Anderson

In 1845, Horace Mann sent a committee of examiners into Boston schools to administer the nation's first standardized test to 500 14 year olds; the committee reported it 'difficult to believe that there should be so many children...unable to answer,...so many absurd answers, so many errors in spelling, in grammar, and in punctuation.' And when children did answer a question correctly, they frequently didn't understand the answer they had given, because, as the examining committee reported, the children had been taught 'the name of the thing rather than the nature of the thing.' Thus, in one classroom, 15 of 20 students could name the date of Jefferson's embargo, but only one student knew what 'embargo' meant.

—Otis Caldwell and  
Stuart A. Curtis

When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone.

—Tony Jeary and John  
Davis

Research shows a strong connection between reading and listening. A child who is listening well shows it by being able to retell stories and repeat instructions. Children who are good listeners in kindergarten and first grade are likely to become successful readers by the third grade. Good fifth-grade listeners are likely to do well on aptitude and achievement tests in high school.

—U. S. Department of  
Education—*What  
Works*

I took an IQ test and the results were negative.

—Internet Meme

Do you train for passing tests or do you train for creative inquiry?

—Noam Chomsky

Teachers find out what students already know and what they still need to learn by assessing student work. They use various means, including essays, quizzes and tests, homework, classroom questions, standardized tests, and parents' comments. Teachers can use student errors on tests and in class as early warning signals to point out and correct learning problems before they worsen. Student motivation and achievement improve when teachers provide prompt feedback on assignments. Students generally take two kinds of tests: classroom tests and standardized tests. Classroom tests help teachers find out if what they are teaching is being learned; thus, these tests serve to evaluate both student and teacher. Standardized tests apply similar gauges to everyone in a specific grade level. By giving standardized tests, school districts can see how achievement progresses over time. Such tests also help schools find out how much of the curriculum is actually being learned. Standardized tests can also reveal problems in the curriculum itself. For example, a recent international mathematics test showed that U.S. students had encountered only 70 percent of what the test covered.

—U.S. Department of  
Education—*What  
Works*

## GLOSSARY OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TERMS

**Formative Assessment:** Assessment that provides feedback for the purpose of improving instruction. In formative assessment one measures the degree to which students know or are able to do a given learning task and identifies the areas in which further teaching is needed. Since it is intended to inform and guide teachers it occurs throughout a course or school year.

**Summative Assessment:** A culminating assessment, at the end of a unit or activity, which gives information on students' mastery of content, knowledge, or skills.

**Norm-referenced Assessment:** An assessment in which an individual or a group's performance is compared to that of a larger 'norm' group.

**Criterion-referenced Assessment:** A test to measure a student's progress toward mastery of specific learning objectives or standards. The 'criterion' is the standard of performance established as the passing score for the test.

**Benchmarks:** Targets for performance, a measurement of group performance against an established standard at defined points along the path.

**Adaptive Tests:** The difficulty of questions increase or decrease on computer-based adaptive tests based on student performance along the way. In this way, the test is customized for each tester. Although the tests cover the same mix of content for all test takers, no two people are likely to receive the same set of questions.

—Judy Salpeter

All subjects are the same. I memorize notes for a test, spew it, ace it, then forget it. What makes this scary for the future of our country is that I'm in the tip-top percentile on every standardized test. I'm a model student with a very crappy attitude about learning.

—Megan McCafferty

I would undervalue grades based on knowing things and find ways to reward curiosity. In the end, it's the people who are curious who change the world.

—Neil deGrasse Tyson

We must be careful not to discourage our twelve-year-olds by making them waste the best years of their lives preparing for examinations.

—Freeman Dyson

Miss Wormwood: Calvin, your test was an absolute disgrace! It's obvious you haven't read any of the material. Our first president was not Chef Boy-Ar-Dee and you ought to be ashamed to have turned in such preposterous answers!

Calvin: I just don't test well.

—Bill Watterson

Pediatricians...tell me...that some parents try to help their kids keep it together by asking doctors for study drugs or even sleeping pills. The feeling that the child isn't doing as well as she could—combined with the knowledge that with the requisite documentation, students can take their SATs and ACTs untimed—often has Mom calling her friends, locating the right educational psychologist, and subjecting the teenager to a battery of tests. The doctor almost always finds something.

—Caitlin Flanagan

Grades really cover up failure to teach. A bad instructor can go through an entire quarter leaving absolutely nothing memorable in the minds of his class, curve out the scores on an irrelevant test, and leave the impression that some have learned and some have not. But if the grades are removed, the class is forced to wonder each day what it's really learning. The questions, What's being taught? What's the goal? How do the lectures and assignments accomplish the goal? become ominous. The removal of grades exposes a huge and frightening vacuum.

—Robert M. Pirsig

Our schools will not improve if we value only what tests measure. The tests we have now provide useful information about students' progress in reading and mathematics, but they cannot measure what matters most in education....What is tested may ultimately be less important than what is untested.

—Diane Ravitch

The best way to ensure an effective educational system is not by standardizing our curricula and tests but by standardizing the opportunities available to all students?

—Ibram X. Kendi

Screaming at children over their grades, especially to the point of the child's tears, is child abuse, pure and simple. It's not funny and it's not good parenting. It is a crushing, scarring, disastrous experience for the child. It isn't the least bit funny.

—Ben Stein

It is not the teacher's proper task to be constantly testing and checking the understanding of the learner. That's the learner's task, and only the learner can do it. The teacher's job is to answer questions when learners ask them, or to try to help learners understand better when they ask for that help.

—John Holt

If we don't assess where our students are and their level of performance, it's going to be difficult for us to provide targeted support and resource allocation in the manner that can best support the closing of the gaps.

—Miguel Cardona

What the research tells us about standardized testing is that there's a strong relationship between demographic variables like student race, family income, parental educational attainment, and students' standardized test scores. School is not the primary influence on student academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores. Out-of-school factors play a greater role. And therefore the use of standardized tests to hold schools accountable doesn't make a tremendous amount of sense.

—Jack Schneider

I see a place for testing if we had no stakes tests that told us where we need to deliver additional resources. Not only would we get more out of the tests, but we can also do less testing. Part of why we have to test every kid every year is because they're using these for high-stakes purposes. It's a part of the theory of change that posits that schools and educators are not working hard enough and what they need is to have their feet held to the fire. We've got 20 years of evidence that that isn't the case. Educators aren't hiding their best lesson plans and waiting for somebody to threaten them.

Research suggests that if you got rid of the stakes, you would see less gaming. So you wouldn't see schools teaching to the test, you wouldn't see teachers doing endless test prep, you wouldn't see schools cheating.

—Jack Schneider

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