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An Open Letter to Pearson

By Jacob Tanenbaum

Dear Pearson and, by extension, McGraw-Hill, and the rest of the companies that produce standardized tests for our classrooms:

Schools all over New York state just finished giving the tests you designed for us. I read that you **got \$32 million** for those. Wow.

Recently, my colleagues and I sat in a meeting at our school learning how to score the tests using your materials. I hear these products are really helpful, and lots of teachers I know who use your grading software to track tests say it's really easy to work with, so thanks for selling all of it to us. New York state and its districts paid a lot of money to buy those tests and the accompanying resources we need to prepare our students and process the scores. You guys made a bundle, but I have one question for you: Can I have a little of that money back for my classroom?

See, I used to have a teaching assistant, but we can't afford her anymore. Our librarian was laid off, and we don't know who will maintain our collection in the years to come. The prekindergarten program was eliminated last year. Class sizes have been going up everywhere I look, and we hardly go on field trips anymore. Music and art are being cut in a neighboring district, and I'm worried about what else is in store for us. School budgets are not keeping up with rising operating costs as state aid and **property taxes continue to shrink**. So as the cost of testing mounts, cuts are made to classrooms like mine.

I know you have everyone convinced that we, teachers, should be held more accountable for student performance, but in trying to raise standards, you've managed to make a lot of money on testing, all of which has come out of classrooms like mine.

Here is a simple truth which you will have to learn and memorize, because there will be a test on it later when we are depending on the next generation to take care of us in our old age: Slashing music, art, library, field trips, and support staff from classrooms so money can go to your company and its shareholders isn't going to help educate anyone.

For the good of the students, you must reconsider. This country can't afford what you are doing to our schools and our children.

Signed,

A Teacher

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