

Overcoming the Pressure to Test

By Starr Sackstein on January 26, 2016 5:19 AM

If we truly want no child left behind,
then we **MUST** stop testing.
The practice alienates children
and inadequately communicates
learning given the biased nature of
most tests and individual students
varying needs.



I hate testing; no abhor it.

Aside from the issues with the tests themselves and how they don't really evaluate what students know and can do, there is the amount of time we waste robbing students of real learning opportunities.

Since we are forever looking for ways to make it easier to quantify that which should never be labeled (what students know), tests are a poor solution at best, to try to make students, teachers and schools more accountable.

And can you tell me when in your adult life you've been asked to memorize a bunch of Googleable facts and under a time pressure sit down and spew forth that knowledge?

Yeah, me either with very little exception and I've been in this game a long time.

Between benchmark testing at the beginning, middle and end of the year, state exams, SATs or ACTs and then other teacher made tests (which have the potential to at least be meaningful), when do we have time to help students love learning?

They spend too much of their time obsessed with scores and learning only what will be tested. We must liberate students and teachers from the chains of testing so the answer to the question, "Why are we are learning this?" doesn't have to be because it's on the test.

Students should be learning skills and content because it will be valuable in their lives now and later. They should understand very transparently the expectations and more importantly the reasons for learning what they are. As teachers, we need to design **learning assessments** that are formative in nature that provide students opportunities to grow their necessary real world skills.

This of course does NOT include bubbling in Scantron forms or answering multiple choice

questions.

Rather than testing incessantly, why not consider alternatives that will actually give students a chance to show what they know in a meaningful way?

Consider this:

Provide a reasonable amount of time, with a properly leveled task and let students creatively work on solving a problem, creating something new, applying their knowledge and skills in a way that demonstrates growth and progress.

And here's the biggest part... let teachers be the ones creating the tasks not companies who think they understand education and learning but really just want to make money.

The most important goal of assessment must be to allow students opportunities to show what they know and the level of mastery they are currently performing at. Timed tests just don't do that adequately.

If all of the **transcripts** and testing and numbers and all of the data used to get students into college were accurate, how come so many students are dropping out in their first year? How come so many need remediation?

If we spent time in school preparing students to be good learners, able to think critically and apply skills across content, then they'd be successful when they got to college, at least more successful. Learners need time to tinker with a problem and figure stuff out, there is no time limit on that and every learner does it differently and at a different pace.

When will we start honoring these aspects of our students?

It's time we start speaking out about how these exams are hurting learning. What will you do to ensure your students have a more well-rounded learning experience in your space?