

improve test scores. Those are two completely different things, and they typically pull in opposite directions. Pressure people to raise scores, and the classroom will be turned into a test-prep center. Such an environment will likely make anyone's passion for learning (or teaching) evaporate.

How might we approach enhancing the motivation of teachers to teach well?

You can't "motivate" people other than yourself. You can make them do certain things by bribing or threatening them, but you can't make them want to do it. In fact, the more you rely on extrinsic inducements like merit pay or grades, the less interest they're likely to have in doing those things. What we can do is support teachers' intrinsic motivation by bringing them in on decision making, by working with them -- so they, in turn, will work with students -- to create a culture, a climate, a curriculum in which a passion for teaching and learning is nourished.

I wrote an article a few years ago called "The Folly of Merit Pay," and I ended it as follows: "So how should we reward teachers? We shouldn't. They're not pets. Rather, teachers should be paid well, freed from misguided mandates, treated with respect, and provided with the support they need to help their students become increasingly proficient and enthusiastic learners."

This week [John Merrow](#) said he hoped people would "go to the rally ready to argue for specific changes in schools -- not just 'holistic education' and the like, but specifics." How would you respond to his request?

Actually, "holistic" education -- along with other adjectives such as "progressive" or "learner-centered" or "constructivist" -- isn't just a vague slogan. It denotes very specific and, in my opinion, sensible and research-backed practices. Of course it takes awhile to explain what they are and why they make sense, so we'll always be at a disadvantage compared to people who speak in sound bites about "bold reform," "raising the bar," "accountability," "tougher standards," and so on. Those are the people we ought to be pushing for specifics: What exactly do you have in mind, pedagogically speaking, beyond bullying teachers and kids to get higher scores on bad tests?

In any case, those of us with a commitment to progressive education are protesting the outrageous policies being foisted on our schools precisely because they make it so difficult to do what makes sense for children. It's precisely because of our desire for meaningful teaching and learning (about which we can be as specific as you'd like) that we oppose the heavy-handed, top-down, test-driven, corporate-styled policies that get in the way.

Incidentally, when ordinary people took to the streets in Cairo and elsewhere in the Middle East, I wonder if John Merrow wagged his finger at them and piously advised them that they ought to have a fully formed plan for democratic government before protesting.

What do you think is the significance of the [Save Our Schools March](#)?

We are living through what future historians will surely describe as one of the darkest eras in American education -- a time when teachers, as well as the very idea of democratic public education, came under attack; when carrots and sticks tied to results on terrible tests were sold to the public as bold "reform"; when politicians who understand nothing about learning relied uncritically on corporate models and metaphors to set education policy; when the goal of schooling was as misconceived as the methods, framed not in terms of what children need but in terms of "global competitiveness" -- that is, how U.S. corporations can triumph over their counterparts in other countries.

