



Save Our Schools

On The March to Preserve and Transform Public Education

saveourschoolsmarch.org

Honorable (Legislator/Official)

Teacher Appreciation Day is May 7, 2013 We ask you to show our appreciation of these dedicated professionals by enacting a moratorium on burdensome high stakes tests. On May 7 stop blaming teachers for our society's complex problems, and stop using student test scores to hold teachers accountable for circumstances that are beyond their control.

Testing takes time and money away from instruction. Instruction is what we hire teachers for.

The evidence is clear that the test scores are not an accurate measure of teachers' effectiveness.

❑ These tests have NO VALIDITY for that purpose. The tests are not designed to give that kind of data.

❑ Statisticians disavow the use of value added modeling of student scores for teacher evaluation; this sophisticated statistical technique can only be used with very large data sets. Indeed teachers' "grades" on these tests swing widely from year to year showing that the grades are due to factors other than the teacher's work.

❑ There is no way to determine what part of a student's score is due to parents, previous instruction, the student's ability, conditions in the school, resources available for instruction, etc.

When test results have serious consequences, high stakes, the accuracy of the measurement is diminished and instruction is distorted.

❑ High stakes undercut tests' value as an indication of what is being learned in class. When children practice test taking skills, the test is not a direct indicator of what children learn in class.

❑ Donald Campbell, founder of the field of program evaluation, showed that high stakes assessment distorted processes in factories and medical practices as well as schools. Indeed we find many schools reducing instruction in science social studies, art, music, and gym in order to focus on language arts and mathematics for the examinations.

❑ Using children's test scores to evaluate teachers and schools distorts the relationship between teachers and students and encourages teachers to focus on test preparation. This is especially harmful since the tests often have superficial questions rather than analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, or creativity.

More detailed and scientific evidence of the consequences of high stakes testing can be found in Economic Policy Institute's Briefing Paper #278, "Problems with the Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers," a formal statement by experts in social science research. The co-authors include educational historian Diane Ravitch and Robert L. Linn, author of the leading textbook on educational assessment.

Race to the Top and Common Core State Standards require that states and cities spend millions of dollars to develop additional tests. Meanwhile many school districts are reducing the number of highly trained teachers employed in the public schools. Certified teachers can assess student learning in multiple ways without standardized tests. Research has shown consistently that smaller class size and highly trained certified teachers increase school learning and narrow the racial and socioeconomic gaps in school achievement. On the other hand, a decade of increased testing in response to No Child Left Behind has not led to any reduction in racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps or improvement in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

We urge you to consider the evidence and hear the voices of teachers, students and parents across the country who have had enough. Honor Teacher Appreciation Day by placing a moratorium on the use of high stakes testing.

Sincerely yours,