

HOW High Stakes Testing DESTROYS CHILDHOOD

- **AFFECTS SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:** Our system of constant testing is almost designed to produce anxiety and depression.
- **KILLS CURIOSITY AND LOVE OF LEARNING:** Actually limits and reduces the amount of **QUALITY** learning experiences. Rather than focusing on a child's natural curiosity, HST emphasizes (and drills in) knowledge rather than creating environments that stimulate a child's imagination.
- **ACTUALLY REDUCES A CHILD'S CAPACITY FOR ATTAINING NEW KNOWLEDGE:** If they cannot actively make meaning out of what they are doing, they do not learn or remember. But most standardized tests are still based on recall of isolated facts and narrow skills. (www.fairtest.org).

HOW High Stakes Testing DESTROYS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **NARROWS THE CURRICULUM:** A loss of a rich and full curriculum. Forget art, music, PE, dance, and recess (in spite of the decades of research that correlates student overall school achievement to participation in these experiences). State-wide testing focuses only on math and reading. Teachers are forced to focus only on those learning strategies that reflect the way material is presented on the tests.
- **MOVING FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATIZATION OF ALL SCHOOLS:** 80% of all schools are anticipated to fail meeting their AYP goals by 2014. Schools that are shut down are bought out by private sector charter schools. Tax money from federal govt. intended for public schools gets funneled to for profit business run charter schools.
- **DIVERTS GREATLY NEEDED FUNDS FROM SCHOOLS TO BUSINESS:** The Department of Education has invested 350 MILLION dollars in developing new tests while millions of schools have cut art, music, and suffer from limited resources including clean drinking water or air conditioning.

- **HIGHER ORDER THINKING IS REPLACED WITH SKILL, DRILL AND KILL:** Most tests include many topics that are not important, while many important areas are not included on standardized tests because they cannot be measured by such tests. Teaching to the test does not produce real and sustained gains on independent learning measures. (www.fairtest.org)

HOW High Stakes Testing UNDERMINES OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

- **VIOLATES THE 1st and 14th AMENDMENTS:** The 14th amendment right to religious/spiritual freedom and the federal law that supersedes state in regards to having control over their child. Federal law supersedes state law. School administrators will try to intimidate parents due to the federal and state requirements for school site participation in order to receive funding.
- **VIOLATES FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938:** If a child is given work or assessments to do in the classroom that will eventually determine the income of a teaching professional, that student is providing the catalyst for the pay. This breaches the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, which states that sixteen is the basic minimum age for employment. It also says that when young people work, the work cannot jeopardize their health, well-being, or educational opportunities.

- **VIOLATES ALL CHILDRENS' RIGHTS TO A FREE AND APPROPRIATE EDUCATION:** High stakes testing leads to under-serving or mis-serving all students, especially the most needy and vulnerable, thereby violating the principle of 'do no harm.'

- **TEACHING TO THE TEST:** Schools, grades K-12, on average spend 10-12 WEEKS before the testing sole on test preparation, replacing meaningful hands-on instruction with skill and drill.
- For more information and resources check out "Opt Out of the State Test: The National Movement" on Facebook and our website*

WWW: **Alfie Kohn, Superintendent in Texas writes:**

I am heartened to see the dawning of a united national effort to oppose the continued perversion of public education that the corporate testing agenda has wrought. It is important for parents to know that school administrators nationwide have no choice but to comply with state and federal testing mandates, even when those mandates require the clearly detrimental over-testing of our children, the indefensible narrowing of the curriculum, and the theft of precious resources from teaching and learning so that they can be invested instead in measuring and labeling. But parents and students have the power to say when enough is enough. Corporate lobbyists speak more loudly than educators—that is clear—but I am convinced that parents and students can speak much more loudly than these deep-pocketed lobbyists with their protests, their opting out, and their votes.

In Texas, we now invest 45 out of 180 school days administering standardized tests. We also have a \$500 million contract with Pearson to develop tests, even as \$4 billion was cut from education and our class sizes are growing. Texas lawmakers have chosen to save the tests but not the teachers. In all 50 states, "testing for its own sake" has grown through the garden of learning like a kudzu vine, and it is choking to death flowers that are far more worthy than itself: music, art, history, and science are withering under its encompassing weight.

Testing corporations have hijacked public education and have increased their profits dramatically in doing so. As these testing giants continue to lobby for more tests, new tests, and ever more expensive tests, it is apparent to me that there will come a day when teachers must be renamed testers, the classroom must be called the testing room, and the little red schoolhouse will finally become the little red widget factory, pumping out standardized children who know nothing beyond what was on the test. That is not the vision I have for my children, my students, or my nation.

Public school teachers once served the children. Today, we are all the servants of the test. You can help by standing up for your child and saying, "Enough is enough. Less testing, more teaching."

Jim Horn at Schools Matter:

I am elated to see this first action step in what I hope will be a full-fledged all-out campaign by parents, students, and educators to put education and the public back into public schooling. As former Commissioner of Education in Rhode Island, Peter McWalters, noted several years ago, when parents and teachers start speaking with a united voice, politicians have no choice but to listen.

That is happening today as you lead this effort, and I am confident that it will spread, particularly as teachers and parents and grandparents all agree that child advocacy for healthy children must constitute the core of our educational concerns.

As education historian, David Tyack, has said, children are about 20 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future. In this time of impending environmental disaster and economic upheaval, we must prepare our children for the real test of living and thriving in a world of multiple challenges that require our best and deepest understanding of where we have been and where we are going.

Thank you for your efforts, one and all

Alfie Kohn, author of The Case Against Standardized Testing and The Schools Our Children Deserve:

Standardized testing can continue only with the consent and cooperation of the educators who allow those tests to be distributed in their schools and the parents who permit their children to take them. If we withhold that consent, if we refuse to cooperate, then the testing process grinds to a halt. For years some of us have been raising the provocative question: What if they gave a test and nobody came? With your help, United Opt Out National can grow into a genuine movement of democratic popular resistance to the testing mania that has been smothering our public schools.

- Alfie Kohn (www.alfiekohn.org)

Yong Zhao, author of Catching Up or Leading the Way:

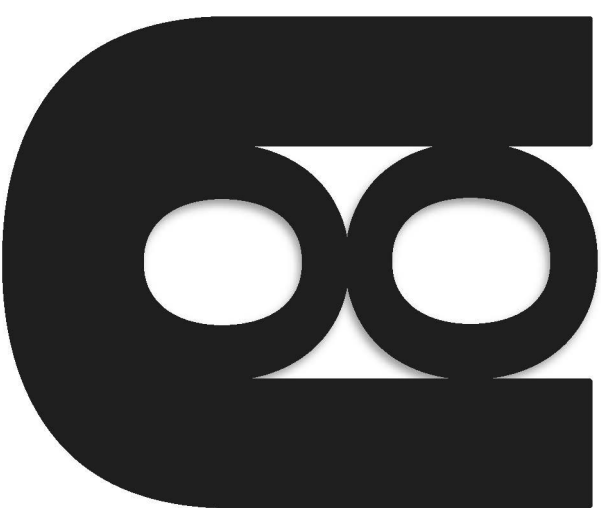
By imposing upon schools and teachers unrealistic, meaningless, and arbitrary goals, high-stakes testing has corrupted the spirit of American education, intoxicated the education environment, and demoralized educators. By forcing schools and teachers to teach to the test, it has narrowed the educational experiences of millions of children and thus deprived our children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, of a real education. It has wasted valuable, precious, and dwindling public funds that could have been put into educating rather than testing our children. It has generated unnecessary fear, anxiety, and loss of confidence in our children. It has distracted us from addressing the real challenges facing education today: poverty, globalization, and technological changes. It has taken away the opportunities and resources for exploring innovations that may lead to true improvements in education. But most importantly, it has eroded the traditional strengths of American education that have made America the world's center of innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, and democracy. These damages have been inflicted for nothing good in return. This decade of high stakes testing has neither narrowed the achievement gap nor made education in our large urban centers any better. It has not even improved test scores.

Advocates of high-stakes standardized testing may argue that the damages are unintended consequences and can be fixed with better tests. More money is being poured into making high-stakes testing "better;" national "common assessments" so states cannot lower their standards; tighter security so teachers and students cannot cheat, as well as increased test validity and accuracy. These technical fixes won't change the nature of high-stakes standardized testing as a simplistic measure of a very small portion of what children learn, what schools teach, and what matters in real life, with the undeserving power to control the behavior of teachers, students, and parents. Thus, regardless of the technical improvements we make, high-stakes standardized testing cannot shake off the collateral damage that is too great for any benefits it may bring.

- Yong Zhao, Ph.D

*Presidential Chair
Associate Dean*

*Professor, Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership
Director, Center for Advanced Technology in Education (CATE)*



**UNITED OPT OUT
NATIONAL**

www.unitedoptout.com

*A movement dedicated to ending
high stakes testing in order
to improve and save
our public schools*