

Mark Holm for The New York Times

Acting New Mexico Secretary of Public Education, Hannah Skandera, right, at a public forum in Roswell earlier this month.
By [DAN FROSCH](#)

Published: December 17, 2013 [134 Comments](#)

ROSWELL, N.M. — On a recent night in this southeastern New Mexico town, Hanna Skandera, the state’s education secretary-designate, told a crowd gathered in a school auditorium about her encounter with a veteran teacher.



“She looked at me, and she goes, ‘You are not as awful as they say,’ ” Ms. Skandera recalled, as laughter rippled through the audience.

For Ms. Skandera, a 40-year-old transplant from California, it was a rare moment of levity in a tumultuous tenure, during which she has sought to overhaul New Mexico’s troubled education system and clashed with teachers, unions and lawmakers in the process.

Ms. Skandera, appointed in 2011 by the state's Republican governor, Susana Martinez, has crisscrossed New Mexico for the past several weeks, rolling out an aggressive [teacher evaluation system](#) devised to improve student achievement in a state that has long ranked near the bottom of most educational metrics.

But the plan has drawn deep resentment from many here, who say it leans too heavily on standardized tests. Last month, teachers wore black clothing and held rallies across the state to denounce Ms. Skandera's data-driven approach. Lawsuits have been filed to block the evaluations but have not advanced in the courts.

Ms. Skandera's time in New Mexico has proved so controversial that for three years, Democratic lawmakers have refused to hold a confirmation vote on her appointment, a reminder, if only symbolic, that she is not fully supported.

"I can do my job regardless of that confirmation," she said cheerfully in an interview. "For too long, we have lost sight of what really is possible for our kids in our state. And it is time to set aside all these adult issues, which are pretty disappointing at times."

A former track athlete in college who held education policy posts under Gov. Jeb Bush in Florida and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, Ms. Skandera has not shied from a fight.

After the Democratic-controlled Statehouse rejected legislation she backed that would have created the evaluation system she wanted, Ms. Skandera decided to use her authority to install it this year.

Quick to cite statistics supporting her position, she insists that increasing teacher accountability is the surest way to help New Mexico's struggling students.

As with other evaluation methods put in place around the country, which have often drawn the ire of teachers, New Mexico uses mainly standardized tests and classroom observations to measure a teacher's effectiveness.

Ms. Skandera's critics argue that far too much weight is given to the standardized component, which counts for up to 50 percent of a teacher's rating. It forces teachers to devote considerable time preparing students for tests, educators have argued, treating them as the most important measure of a child's progress.

"This is a train wreck," said Stephanie Ly, the president of the American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, which filed two unsuccessful lawsuits to block the evaluations. "It's set up for our students and teachers to fail."

Ms. Skandera said she was mindful of the concerns. But she said the state was obligated to use the evaluations as part of a [waiver](#) on requirements in the No Child Left Behind law that the Obama administration granted.

"We'll get a rich picture of student achievement over time," she said, noting that a

student's growth would be measured over three years.

Educators, however, contend that Ms. Skandera has shunned other valid ways to judge teachers.

Kathy Korte, a member of the Albuquerque school board, said Ms. Skandera had refused to consider giving more weight to classroom observations. She also rejected the idea of starting the evaluations gradually, Ms. Korte said, even though districts were already burdened with carrying out new Common Core standards for math and English.

"To have the door shut in my face constantly is arrogant," Ms. Korte said, "and it shows a great disrespect to those working in the classroom."

Ms. Korte recently sent an email to constituents, urging parents to opt out of certain standardized tests. But Albuquerque's school board rejected a more sweeping proposal to send a formal letter telling parents they could opt out.

At times, the criticism has become personal. Last month, the superintendent of Albuquerque Public Schools, Winston Brooks, was suspended for three days after posting comments on Twitter likening Ms. Skandera to farm animals.

"I can either focus on my comfort," Ms. Skandera said, "or we can say, 'Wait a minute. Did we set out to give it our very, very best to deliver on a promise we are not delivering to our kids right now?'"

As she travels the state, one of her selling points has been [reading and math scores](#) that the National Assessment of Educational Progress recently released.

Students in fourth and eighth grades in Tennessee and Washington, D.C., which started using evaluation systems that emphasize standardized tests, showed marked improvement since 2011. Students in those grades in New Mexico registered no significant progress and ranked near the bottom.

Ms. Skandera's opponents, however, pointed out that some states with rigorous teacher evaluations showed little improvement.

Some critics give her credit, at least, for not running from teachers' concerns and acknowledge that she has been effusive in calling for change.

"I bet you a million bucks, we'd be friends in another life," Ms. Korte said. "She's passionate, and she wants to see education improve, as do all of us."

Ricky Williams, the superintendent of Hagerman Municipal Schools near Roswell, praised Ms. Skandera's visits to school districts to explain the evaluations, saying they had been helpful.

"The secretary, from my point of view has been very open to having conversations about

it,” he said.

Many rank-and-file teachers, though, still view Ms. Skandera skeptically. She has never been a full-time teacher, and educators here echo what is a common criticism of such administrators: that she cannot fully comprehend the challenges they face, especially in a state troubled by deep poverty and other social problems.

“When you have people who are out of touch with what’s happening in the classroom, you get a lot of miscommunication and anger,” said Pamela Cort, who teaches French at Las Cruces High School.

At the meeting in Roswell, Sara Montgomery, a music instructor, told the crowd that while she was dazzled by Ms. Skandera’s presentation, it missed something critical.

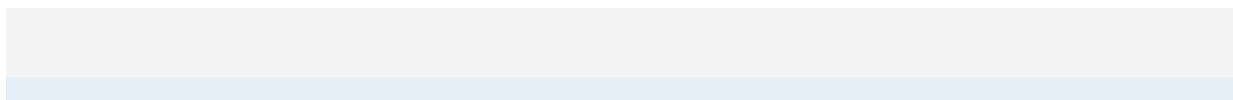
“I haven’t heard one thing that addresses the most important part,” Ms. Montgomery said. “Which is what is going on around our schools that prevents the teachers from being able to get information to the kids.”

With a nod, Ms. Skandera reverted to her expertise.

“They come from a home life that’s rough,” she said. “They may not have eaten breakfast. Poverty. We can actually look at the history of a how a student is performing. And it can inform a lot about the future.”

134 Comments

Share your thoughts.



1.



PMAC

Parsippany

2.

Every teacher in this country should be evaluated. Why should any teacher be exempt from an

evaluation? -- In the business world, we all deal with performance evaluations, and if you are not meeting your responsibilities, you are given a warning -- if no improvement - then you are OUT! Tthe worst thing to happen in our educational system is tenure.....when a teacher cannot be fired.....no matter how bad they are (or become).

I interview young people looking for jobs -- they can't even write - let alone have a face to face conversation. They are the products of our educational system, and these young people are not prepared for the business world -- or anything else.

When I think of the thousands of dollars they spend on education, most of those parents should DEMAND a REFUND!!!!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:49 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND

3.
4.
5.



darker
NY

6.
7.

Standardized tests demonizing teachers is a horrific scam by billionaires who want to get even richer by selling you "education".

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:48 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND1

8.
9.
10.



JMC
Huntington

11.
12.

You gotta love these administrators who have never taught, telling teachers how to teach. This is what education reform is about. Look at NYC - Joel Klein never taught a single day, yet he dished out the curriculum to 1.1 million teachers, which by the way, was junk. Everyday Math (now in the garbage) and Teacher's College Reading and Writing workshop (still used by many with religious zeal, this curricula is easily spotted as a Whole Language remake.)

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:40 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND2

13.
14.
15.



16.

Hazlit

Vancouver, BC

17.

The answer to good teaching is more money for teachers, fewer criticisms, and less accountability. Why is this the right policy? If we have bad teaching it's because we place a low value on teaching. Good teaching, then comes from valuing teaching. (Simple, right?) So how do you value teaching? In most of America money equals value, so you PAY teachers more. Why less accountability? Because good teaching can't be measured. Teaching is an art, not a science. What gives art value? Only what you pay for it--the same applies to teaching. If you want Picasso-level teaching, you have to pay Picasso painting level prices. You don't second guess the price, you just pay it, because you want a Picasso. Same with teaching. If you think this proposal sounds like money for nothing, this is because you place a low value on teaching. Hence, we come back to where we started. Want better teaching?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:39 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND

18.

19.

20.



21.

Jim Jacobs

Truth or Consequences

22.

New Mexico - almost exactly middle of the road spending per student. Rated dead last in the US for education k thru 12. Ms. Skandera and the gov. are doing exactly what needs to be done - which is trying something different. Teachers and union have no ideas other than shrink class size etc... - spend more money per student. Are admin costs higher here than other states? Heaven forbid - calculate quality of k thru 12 education without the indian reservations and see where the state's at? Please look for solutions.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:38 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND

23.

24.

25.



26.

masswasting

Bozeman, MT

27.

All of the "reformers" from Hanna Skandera to Michelle Rhee to Rahm Emmanuel and Arne Duncan are really privateers. The whole point of privatizing education is to reduce the cost of labor in addition to selling textbooks, test regimes, and common core standards. All of the above, plus many more, plus the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation and other ngo's work hand-in-glove with the Pearson and other corporate education interests to reduce the numbers of teachers and de-professionalize a very demanding profession--all the while not bothering to look at real reform. These people and corporations could care less about children or teachers.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:37 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND2

28.
29.
30.



31.

Paul
Phoenix, AZ

32.

When I went to public school in the South Bronx in the 1960s the teacher was revered in and by the community, on a level with doctors and lawyers. If a kid came home with a bad report from the teacher, there was no doubt about the parents actions: that kid was in deep trouble.

Today, it is the teacher who would be in trouble.

Want to make teachers accountable for what goes on in their classrooms? OK, give them full authority, over that of principals, school boards, politicians and parents, no questions asked, unless of course the teacher is doing something illegal or clearly not in the student's interest.

Total, absolute control in exchange for total, absolute accountability.

Any other equation simply makes the teacher the equivalent of a retail employee, with all of the responsibility but none of the authority.

Let's see if conservatives have the courage of their convictions on that one.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:37 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND1

33.
34.
35.



36.

Alex
Albuquerque, New Mexico

37. NYT Pick

As the son of a current teacher in New Mexico, I can clarify that this teaching evaluation system is a bit more complicated than what was let on. For example, teacher's evaluations will actually be based on groupings. For example, art teachers (of which there are no tests for art knowledge and creativity) will be grouped in with english teachers to have their performances judged. The average improvement of the students, of the grade as a whole, are used as scores for the teacher's evaluations. Consequently, if you were the best teacher in the world according to the criteria of the test, and your students improved drastically, your score still might be dismal; it lumps in the scores of other teacher's students at the school. In addition, in the case of the art teacher, they are being evaluated on a student score they have no control over... They don't teach english!

These criticisms don't even begin to touch the fact that we need to ask ourselves, "Should teacher just teach to the test?" Some of my best teachers in High School were the ones who didn't: the History teacher who gave a first count his days as a reporter at the Watergate Trials or the Physics teacher who challenged us to design our own lab, with no instruction, on how to measure the acceleration of gravity

As a New Mexican, these reforms overlook our deep seated peculiarities. The responsibility of teaching and learning doesn't lie only on the teachers, but with our community as a whole.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:12 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND7

38.



1.

darker
NY

2.

The number one job of a responsible community is to get the billionaires out of Education Profiteering.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:49 p.m.
RECOMMEND

3.

39.



40.

Old Alaskan
Alaska

41.

So the teachers are against evaluation program and being held accountable for their lousy performance? It boggles the mind!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:11 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND

42.



1. **FlyOverMe**
Michigan

2.

Anecdotal stories of terrible teachers abound, yet when asked to list such teachers, I cannot get people to produce a list beyond one or two names. It's a curious thing. Where are all these terrible teachers?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:40 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

3.

43.



44. **Elizabeth Renant**
New Mexico

45.

No matter how often Finland's and South Korea's examples are held up, whose schools are outrunning those across most of the western world, let alone dismal New Mexico's, no one will acknowledge their experience: valuing teachers rather than bullying them (i.e., paying them well - not with "merit" bonuses but with good salaries), investing in quality education and resources for teachers, and not "teaching to the test", are the road to results.

Ms. Skandera's heart may be in the right place but she's working off assumptions already disproved by the PISA tests. You don't get results by intimidating teachers with standardized tests (which Finland's excellent public school system for the most part utilizes sparingly). Teachers in NM face underfunded public schools in which youth are routinely bullied, many youngsters come from homes where English is a second and infrequently used language without parents who have pursued higher education, and a low tax base that ensures poor resources - as opposed to, say, a school district like Scarsdale, New York.

The real problem in the US is that quality public education is doled out on the basis of parental tax bracket. Does anyone think that Finland's schools got where they are by giving resources only to the wealthy? Or helping CEOs of private educational companies get rich by destroying the public school system? Or by "teaching to the test"?

"Crazy" is doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different result.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:07 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND8

46.
47.
48.



49.

Patrick Stevens

Mn

50.

Lori,

I also was a teacher. I designed assessment, assessed assessment tools, and taught. I worked endless hours to try to do the best for every kid who entered my space. I would never go back to it. The endless drill and practice crud that now suffices for teaching technique is a horror, but it is cheap and easy, and that appears to be what America desires. Sorry a out the typos in my earlier note. They are so distracting.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:07 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND4

51.



1.

Lori

New York

Verified

2.

Thanks for your contribution! Yes, the drill and practice approach is not really related to good teaching/learning, though iy may be related to good measuring. I do not think kids are learning more or better since NCLB began. we do not have educational reform, we have test reform (and I am familiar with test development as well. I say its like thinking the cure for cancer is to get better blood tests.)

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:26 p.m.

RECOMMEND2

3.

52.

53.



Richard O'Neill
Claremont, CA

54.

It has been said that the chief job of a school admin is to keep their job, and that the particular set of skills required has most to do pleasing elected officials, and which relies very little on a firm insight into that set of complex transactions we call effective teaching. Teachers, despite their famous complacency, can intuit who really understands their work and who is a ' tap dancer ', ie, those whose knowledge base derives from the hopelessly ephemeral conclusions of education researchers and their harumphing backers in the political class. Someday teachers may assert that their knowledge is superior, but who would dare hold their breath awaiting? I have hope for Michelle Lee; she knows how hard it is to teach. Can this Ms Skandera prove the same?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:07 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND

55.

56.

57.



JW
Albuquerque

58.

59.

This article downplays the connection between Skandera and the Republican agenda to privatize education and destroy organized teachers. She came from Jeb Bush's similar efforts immediately prior with that agenda. Improving test scores are a ruse.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:06 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND8

60.

61.

62.



ecorso
Penasco, New Mexico

63.

64.

I have been writing about this since Ms Skandera was anointed. First and foremost it must be

noted that MsSkandera has no educational background or qualifications. Skandera was a Jeb Bush staff member who was elevated because of her political connections. The New Mexico gubernadora hired Skandera on the recommendation of her political contributors. The principle thrust of Ms Skandera's tenure has been privatization because that is the agenda of her sponsors. If you read any transcript of any conference Ms Skandera has attended since her anointment you find her advocating public school privatization. All of what I have put forth here is verifiable and may be read in greater detail n my blog site: .

As of today, after three years of holding her post, Ms Skandera has yet to be confirmed as New Mexico's Secretary of Education - I predict she never will be.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:06 p.m.

REPLY
RECOMMEND10

65.
66.
67.



68.

snowyphile
Jemez Springs, NM

69.

The best quality of NM government is its relative impotence. This 'solution' solves nothing. Shuffle the deck, and NM schools will still be #52.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:32 p.m.

REPLY
RECOMMEND1

70.
71.
72.



73.

wingate
san francisco

74.

Once and again and again teachers resists any form of accountability. The best and the brightest don't go into education and the schools of education turn out mediocre if not unfit teachers. One only has to read books like The Smartest Kids in the World to understand why the educational system in this country is miserable. Forget all the excuse making , poverty, language etc. High quality education is provided when we have well qualified teachers paid well and a system that demands performance/ accountability from everyone including parents.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.

REPLY
RECOMMEND2

75.

[READ ALL 4 REPLIES](#)



1.

FredJK
NY

2.

I don't mind accountability. I welcome it. What I don't welcome are voodoo practices that have no basis in reality. You want to evaluate me? Great. But what they are doing amounts to little more than throwing chicken bones. If we evaluated our students the way we are being evaluated then we would be fired, and rightly so.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:07 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

3.



4.

yR
Seattle

5.

"...a system that demands performance/ accountability from everyone.."

That should extend to those who comment about education.

Here is a newsflash: valid testing of student growth in most subjects is in its infancy. Most teachers are more than willing to show what they have accomplished, but they don't necessarily have faith in the evaluators or their tools.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:07 p.m.
RECOMMEND3

6.



7.

tanstaafi
Houston

8.

There are 3.6 million K-12 teachers in the U.S. (By comparison, there are 4.5 million retail sales clerks.) It is not possible to find 3.6 million highly skilled teachers. And it is impossible

to rate teacher effectiveness using rubrics that rely heavily on standardized test results. If there were some easy solution, it would have been employed already. I have some suggestions: 1. Increase average class size, reduce the number of teachers, and increase the average teacher salary substantially. 2. Ask the best students (the top 10%) to rate their teachers, in middle school and above. 3. Rely upon external student outcomes to measure student achievement, not tests written by government officials. But, bluntly, given the sorry social circumstances so many kids confront in the U.S. (including, yes, poverty), it would take a miracle to improve student learning in the U.S. to any large measure.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:37 p.m.
RECOMMEND

9.

76.



77.

FredJK
NY

78.

I just finished correlating two pre-tests to determine which is more appropriate as a predictor of student outcomes on the state assessment. One was the MAPS test and the other a 25-question pre-test designed by the district. Not only did the two test not correlate AT ALL with each other, neither reflects the reality of what the students' performance in class has been so far this year. My take-away from this? This whole APPR thing is nothing more than a scam designed to ensure that teachers fail, particularly tenured, experienced veteran teachers that districts are salivating to get rid of. New York's John King and Merryl Tisch have just finished their propaganda tour of the state and their takeaway after session after session of outcry from the public? They don't have to change a thing. Isn't that wonderful?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND7

79.



1.

FlyOverMe
Michigan

2.

Since the mandates come from the State levels, its hard to see where districts are 'salivating' to get rid of experienced teachers. Lawmakers very well may be, but not so much local districts in my experience.

In Michigan, we cut funding for all districts significantly and now many are falling and will be taken over by the State. When looking at the totality of districts in our state, if you remove the poverty districts we have very well performing schools. Seems the issue is still poverty, which tests are no help with.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:49 p.m.
RECOMMEND

3.

80.



81.

xandtrek
Santa Fe, NM

82.

New Mexico is one of those states where outside interests think they can come in and use us as guinea pigs. Governor Martinez got elected with the help of a lot of outside money and advisers, and she is potentially being groomed for national GOP office.

This education scheme and Hanna Skandera are part of the neo-Bush/NCLB scheme to privatize education, and dismantle unions. By turning students into little data creators, you can then push for the solution to come from the private world. This has nothing to do with actually educating our students, and I would surmise that more and more testing will create less educated students.

I'm glad the NYT is bringing this story to the fore, as what happens in New Mexico, may be coming to your state soon.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND11

83.

84.

85.

86.



David Hurst
Ontario

87.

The American education system, like the corporate world, loves its heroes. Unfortunately the repeated use of heroes in an organization creates a boom-bust cycle that demands yet more heroes and the system can become addicted to them. We know their names: Alan Bersin in San Diego, Joel Klein in New York City and Michelle Rhee in the District of Columbia. In each case we see heroic actions, often conducted with great power but with little thought for continuity and the development of community.

Means like standardized testing and teacher evaluations run away with the ends. The purposes of the institution the "Who?" and the "Why" get forgotten and are replaced with the "What" and the "How". However tools and techniques are useless unless there is a shared value system and a clear understanding of the organization's mission.

The heroes have no time for this, having vowed to show short term results (which they often do). After they either leave or they have alienated enough of the community to be thrown out results

deteriorate or are shown to have been manipulated (everything from teaching-to-the-test to outright cheating) in some way. This leads to the search for another hero....

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND1

88.



1.

Paul Gottlieb

east brunswick, nj

2.

"heroes... We know their names: Alan Bersin in San Diego, Joel Klein in New York City and Michelle Rhee in the District of Columbia."

In support of Mr Hurst's comments about the "heroes" of education reform:

Michelle Rhee-an internet search of her name brings up cheating scandal and erasures on standardized tests during her tenure in Washington, DC. Joel Klein-while Bloomberg's Chancellor of Education, he closed public schools and replaced them with charter school, which were allowed space in public school buildings rent-free. Now he works for News Corporation selling a tablet-based curriculum that would ultimately transfer taxpayer money into Rupert Murdoch's pocket.. Alan Bersin- . a search of his name yields the following: "While Bersin is long gone, the backlash against his reforms has continued to shape school reform in San Diego, unified, sometimes in very different ways than his backers might have intended. The school board members elected years after Bersin invoke his name as an example of how not to reform schools."

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:37 p.m.

RECOMMEND

3.



4.

FlyOverMe

Michigan

5.

Can we remove Michelle Rhee from the list of hero's now that her district showed systemic cheating by teachers on students standardized tests?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:50 p.m.

RECOMMEND

6.

89.



90. **T164**
Chicago, IL
91. NYT Pick

Sufficient FUNDING, not more standardized tests, is precisely what is necessary if we want the students of this nation to improve. We need smaller class sizes and properly funded schools.

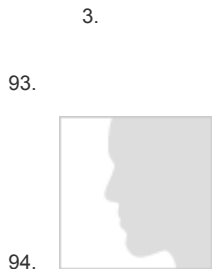
Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:23 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND6



92. 1. **Lori**
New York
Verified
2.

In New Mexico, there are radio commercials for the public to DONATE money and books to schools because they don't have enough!! But they somehow have enough money to buy tests. Amazing.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:46 p.m.
RECOMMEND1



93. 3.
94. **CMS**
new mexico
95. NYT Pick

Among New Mexico students are some extremely bright and creative kids. None of them, to my knowledge, has been asked to contribute ideas about what might make their schools and student performance better. Neither have business and community leaders and employers who might be able to shed light on what abilities, beyond knowledge of math and being able to read, they expect new members of the workforce to have mastered. Neither have caring parents.

Many New Mexico teachers and some administrators and school board members, have taken it on themselves to voice questions and objections to Skandera's grand plan. They have been largely ignored --or even targeted for political retribution.

Not only has Skandera never been a teacher, she appears to lack any understanding of New Mexico's diverse and disproportionately disadvantaged people. "They come from a home life that's rough," she said. "They may not have eaten breakfast. Poverty." To which her only answer seems to be "so what?" since "We can actually look at the history of a how a student is performing."

No, Ms. Skandera. Looking at the history here solves nothing -- and this history is already pretty well known. Feeding the kids might solve something, as might listening to stakeholders. Increasing classroom time and decreasing class size might help. Throwing a bunch of tests at the kids won't. And neither will holding teachers accountable for factors they cannot control.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:54 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND14

96.



1.

Lori
New York
Verified

2.

To go further, the population of New Mexico is quite different from the population of California, Skandera's home state. While both have large Hispanic populations, and some poverty, NM is much more a rural state, not an urban state, with Hispanic families going back for many generations - some of them from the original conquistadors. There is a sizable Native American population, over 10%. There are fairly strong community and family ties in NM, although a history of "Anglos" moving in to largely dominate. (even though they are in the minority). Although Hispanic, they are usually not immigrants.

It is a place where you can work with the community, rather than impose top-down rule, such as Skandera is attempting. Many of the teachers and principals are Hispanic. It would work much better to engage long standing community members than using "national" solutions. Except if you are looking for national political office at the expense of your constituents. .

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:05 p.m.
RECOMMEND3

3.

97.



98.

Lori

New York
Verified

99.

Although I live in NYC, I have a second home in New Mexico. We moved there shortly after 9/11 because my then 8 year old daughter was very upset having witnessed events on 9/11. I was a former NYC elementary school teacher, who later went for a PhD in psychology. I was impressed by teachers and administrators in her public school in NM. They were dedicated and cared about the children. There was community cohesion (some teachers taught at the same school they attended years before as students).

It was the year that "No Child Left Behind was" announced.

I remember going up to the assistant principal after the meeting announcing this new program. I whispered to him: "This NCLB program sounds awful and will hurt the kids! He whispered back: "I know, I agree, but what can we do? It's political".

OK, 12+ years later, we have little gains, in NM or elsewhere, and much more animosity between politicians and rank-and-file teachers. My family moved back to NYC, and my daughter is now in college (back in New Mexico - she loves the state for its arts and geography) But we KNEW what would happen eventually with the schools, and I am sorry that then, as now, politicians don't listen to the expertise of teachers in the first place. Arrogant.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:54 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND15

100.
101.
102.



103.

H. Gottlieb
Guilford Ct

104.

When are we going to ask our school boards for accountability ????

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:49 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND4

105.
106.
107.



108.

rawebb
Little Rock, AR

109.

We have yet to design an achievement test that does not measure primarily general cognitive ability--what we used to call IQ. Most of the scores on such tests is determined by genetic factors; the rest is early environment, though that tends to fade out in the teenage years. The tests are good predictors of grades, but even better predictors of how far students go in school, where they will go to college, and their adult professions. Using standardized achievement tests to evaluate teachers, on the other hand, is an invalid use of the tests that, in my opinion, violates professional standards for the use of tests. The tests only tell us who is in the class room. If the tests do correlate with teacher behavior, they are probably detecting cheating of some form.

The best way to end the pressure to include standardized tests in teacher evaluations--which I am sure sounds like common sense to people uninformed about measurement issues--might be a lawsuit by teachers against the test makers. Force the test makers to demonstrate to a judge that their tests can actually discriminate good teaching from bad. I'd bet in an open, adversarial, process they would fail.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND9

110.



1.

Yars

MA

2.

Nonsense. "Achievement" tests are everywhere in life, and they are a valid measurement of knowledge, and in some cases, of skills. You don't need an IQ of 160 to learn the "rules of the road," so that you can pass a driver's license written (or oral) test. You don't have to be a Mensa member to learn the rules of a game, such as softball or soccer. It's both easy and valid to determine whether one has the applicable knowledge.

We hire teachers to help kids learn. One component of evaluating how well they teach is the measurement of what their students have learned during the interval when they were being taught by the teachers being evaluated. There's no rocket science in that, either. With a large enough sample size, valid conclusions can be drawn with confidence.

Methinks thou dost protest too much.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.

RECOMMEND1

3.



4.

Elizabeth Renant

New Mexico

5.

@Yars - MA - you need to take a look at Finland's public school system, which uses standardized tests very sparingly but gets excellent results. Yes, we hire teachers to help kids learn; but we don't educate teachers well, we more often vilify than support them, and we expect them to compensate for the cultural ills that, in a place like New Mexico, impede learning: high poverty rates, many children from homes where English is a second language and very few heads of household with an advanced degree, and where a low tax base guarantees low teacher salaries and lousy resources.

Do you really think that, for example, the teachers in Brookline, MA face the same issues that teachers in Gallup, NM do? I suggest you take a trip out here and tour the schools along the I-25 corridor and see the dismal surroundings, harried teachers, low motivation, and woeful conditions. It is heartbreaking.

Brookline is a wealthy area where the taxes of all those doctors, lawyers, and investment bankers ensure the best teachers, high teacher salaries, and schools full of resources. If you think teachers in Gallup or Farmington or Espanola or Abiquiu should be expected to work miracles and function the way teachers in Brookline do, then you are living on the Planet Denial.

Finland's schools didn't get where they are by demeaning teachers, paying them lousy salaries, giving them poor preparation, and reserving the best resources for the kids with the richest parents.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:12 p.m.

RECOMMEND3

6.

111.



112.

Joe Schmoie
Brooklyn

113.

Any politician with children who pushes major "reforms" to public education should be forced to put their own kids in the very same schools affected. This would somewhat help with the obvious angle of privatization and avarice involved.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND11

114.

115.

116.



117.

A cynic

Geneva, Switzerland

118.

Teacher evaluation is a thorny problem. You can evaluate teachers on the basis of standardized testing (a doubtful measure of ability) which provides them with an incentive to "teach to the test" rather than teach students to think for themselves.

The other option is no more attractive. You can use extremely subjective criteria, such as "does the teacher invite class participation?" and the like, instead of looking at numbers from standardized tests. This is a different problem. A lot of teachers will teach better at one time than at another.

At my school, one teacher obviously does not belong in a classroom. She is severely bipolar, and prone to tantrums. However, since evaluations involve only a classroom visit or two, she hasn't yet been seen at her worst during an evaluation (repeated complaints have gone nowhere. This is a private school-an expensive private school, actually-meaning that, according to Republicans, it's more efficient, and can get rid of bad teachers more easily).

This case embodies the problems with evaluation not based on tests: you need to sit in on at least a dozen classes, over a period of weeks, for it to be reasonably accurate. Teachers can easily put on an act (the subjective evaluation version of "teaching to the test). Evaluators are overly lenient.

There's no good answer to this dilemma, short of "hire an evaluator for every 10-20 teachers." That, unfortunately, is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND3

119.

120.

121.



122.

BlueWaterSong

California

123.

"Quick to cite statistics supporting her position, she insists that increasing teacher accountability is the surest way to help New Mexico's struggling students."

"Ms. Skandera's opponents, however, pointed out that some states with rigorous teacher evaluations showed little improvement."

This article would be informative if it included some research and evaluation of these two statements. As it is, it is essentially a "he-said she-said" account that isn't really helpful and isn't

really news. It mentions that there is some news regarding this topic if one wants to go and do the work, but it doesn't really contain any news. And isn't that really what a news article should contain?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND7

124.
125.
126.



127.

Justician

New Mexico

128.

I am a New Mexico college professor married to a high school teacher, and I can tell you that all this testing has been a fiasco. You end up with kids who do well on multiple choice exams where at least two of the answers can be eliminated by anyone, even if they have done no reading and never been in class. They have trouble with grammar, organization of thoughts, and making basic inferences.

Meanwhile, back in K-12, meaningful educational strategies of gifted teachers have been crowded out of the classroom. The standardized testing crowd ignores the fact that teachers test their students all the time, but they test them on the specific class experiences designed and implemented by the teachers themselves. Centralized tests impose uniformity and punishes engagement.

The real irony is that teachers I know really, really want to teach with good teachers. They know who is good and who is not, and they support programs that improve the poor teachers and weed out the hopeless. They are resisting invalid and arbitrary tests masquerading as accountability.

What amazed me about your reporting is that you were able to find a single teacher in New Mexico who had a single positive thing to say about the educational leadership of the state.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND15

129.
130.
131.



132.

WalterZ

Ames, IA

133.

Teaching done well is complex intellectual work.

The teacher sets out to explain what a protein or metaphor is, or how to balance the terms in an algebraic equation, or the sociological dynamics of prejudice, but to do so needs to be thinking about *how* to explain these things: what illustrations, what analogies, what alternative explanations when the first one fails?

This instruction is done not only to convey particular knowledge about metaphors or algebraic equations, but also to get students to understand and think about these topics. This involves hefty cognitive activity, as any parent knows from his or her experiences explaining things to kids, but the teacher is doing it with a room full of young people—which brings a significant dimension of performance to the task.

Thus teaching is a deeply social and emotional activity. Teachers have to know their students and be able to read them quickly, and from that reading make decisions to slow down or speed up, stay with a point or return to it later, connect one student's comment to another's. Simultaneously, they are assessing on the fly Susie's silence, Pedro's slump, Janelle's uncharacteristic aggressiveness. How teachers draw on this dynamic interaction varies depending on their personal style, the way they organize their rooms, and so on—but it is an ever-present part of the complex work they do.

TESTS TELL US NOTHING ABOUT THE ABOVE.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND9

134.
135.
136.



137.

AI
Ohio

138.

I'm sorry, the real problem is not the teachers, but the parents.

If parents do not participate on a daily basis with their children's education then nothing will change. You can blame the schools all you want, but it is the supervision of the parents and their involvement with a child's homework and their involvement with the schools which is critical. Parents today take the lazy way out: They're too tired, or overworked or whatever. Stop blaming the schools and look in the mirror.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND8

139.
140.
141.



142.

dv
NM

143.

For many years I was a department head at a New Mexico high school. When a teaching position opened, we were generally presented with a list of candidates from which to conduct interviews. The pickings were often rather slim. In fact, more often than not we had to choose from the least bad of many poor options. There just wasn't a lot of quality competition.

So if we go to stricter evaluations, what then? Fire the underperforming teachers and replace them with.....what?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND5

144.
145.
146.



147.

Patrick Stevens
Mn

148. NYT Pick


The nails on chalkboard screech of accountability seems to be tearing at the ears of America. It is as if American teachers were not accountable ever, and that their classrooms were empty of learning, that is, until testing companies realized that horrible truth. Now, with the guidance of every curmudgeon in the country who has a grudge against public education, we have hundreds of thousands of testing guru's who are going to straighten out those classroom teachers and make them acutally teach what is meaningful and significant and improtant to every child in ever classroom all of the time. Or by gosh, we are going to ferret out the teachers (and there must by millions of them) who aren't doing their jobs, and won't do their jobs. and are going to get fired.....becuase tests will prove them worthless at their work.

At the same time, of course, billions will be made by testing companies, and text book publishers, and private, test oriented charter schools who will prey on school systems, and parents with the promise of higher test scores.

That, America, is what this is all about. There is money, lots and lots of money being made by huge coroporations who have a direct line into all of the money that we pay into the public school systems of America. It's not failing school or failing students, or failing teachers that are the problem. The problem is the tests.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:32 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND46

149.


1. 
Lori
New York
Verified
- 2.

You are correct, Patrick. I was a teacher in the 1960's (!) and we gave standardized tests then. I was a student in the 50's (!) and we took standardized tests then, including Regents exams. It's just that the administrators weren't obsessed by numbers only.

Teachers were accountable then, too - we mostly majored in education in college (for elementary grades that I taught) had to pass licensing exams, were "observed" by school administration on a regular basis etc.

Today's politicians see it in their interest to downgrade teachers. There is nothing that is "better" about education now, no breakthrough pedagogy, just more money for people who don't have much background in classroom teaching (like charter schools, politicians, investors, test publishers, etc.)

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:42 p.m.
RECOMMEND14

- 3.
150. 
151. **anonymous12**
US
- 152.

Our kids are down 24 nations in the core subjects. The reason? Unionized teachers who have fought against any evaluation methods, including standardized testing. If most people did their jobs with outcomes tanking like the outcomes we see among American schoolchildren, termination notices would be flying.

It is time for American parents to give teachers a report card that accurately reflects outcomes in comparison with international rankings. Standardized testing and severe evaluations, not to mention breaking the backs of unions are simple steps to regain control over a failed system and bad educational practices such as the trend of "creative" teaching over traditional methods that used to place us in the top five.

Community by community, this nation needs to teach teachers a lesson: Your methods are a failure. No more short days, no more "creative" teaching not in tandem with traditional (and

successful) rote methods, no more grading homework as part of your work day, no more refusing to be evaluated in comparison to the 23 nations ahead of us in international ranking for outcomes. Standardized testing is at least something of an evaluation process. If teachers don't like it, they can ask themselves how long they would last in a job where their outcomes proved dismal year after year. Time to stop drinking the "We're Heroes" Kool Ade served up by teacher's unions.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:29 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND5

153.

[READ ALL 4 REPLIES](#)



1.

David Krupp
Queens, NY

2.

The states with the best scores are almost all unionized as are all the countries the beat us on international tests. It seems that you have exactly backwards. Union membership seems to improve student's test scores.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND12

3.



4.

Ken Kiser.
Tulsa Okla

5.

So let's take the "let's hold public school teachers accountable" to the illogical end state! Let assume that 25 to 30 per cent of teachers are found wanting and are given their pink slips! I call this stage one. Now about stage two. How do the critics of the current public schools propose to replace those "incompetent" teachers with thousands of high performing "magical" classroom teachers? I would imagine states would, at minimum, need to double what the current teacher cohort makes in compensation. Also these new high performing teachers would demand much better working conditions starting with a significant lowering of class size from K to 12. Alas, this costs the states even more. So I would close by suggesting that any politician who doesn't have a legitimate answer to the "stage two" challenge be considered a fool and a liar!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
RECOMMEND3

6.



8.

David you can cherry pick you facts all you want. Teachers are failing our children all over the place at the same time teachers and unions maneuver for less and less accountability. I

Teachers used to teach. It was probably somewhat boring and repetitive. Then in the late 70s the idea of "creative teaching" came into the classroom. Even as a student I saw it as a ruse. I wanted to study and learn not be babysat, which is all creative teaching is. Do you think students in the 23 better performing counties earn "science and nature" credits by going to the park as a class to "search" for bugs and do a "worksheet" in order to fulfill science requirements, or do you think they read a textbook chapter, researched questions, and wrote an essay that was graded and handed back for corrections then graded again? I have been across this globe, observing how much smarter and more sophisticated foreign students are compared to American kids and it is just sad. It is also the fault of the people at the helm of education in this land and blaming families for what is their job no longer holds water. We can see a demarcation line associated with the beginning of creative methods being implemented, teachers unions marketing them as cultural heroes in the 1980s and the end of rote learning methods. American teachers are overpaid, spoiled and singularly responsible for the failure of our educational system.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:11 p.m.
RECOMMEND1

9.

154.



156.

Other than standardized testing, there is no remotely objective way of measuring how much kids learn during the school year. None. It would be nice if commenters here proffered solutions instead of complaints.

Here's mine: the Stanford-10 tests, now in their tenth incarnation. Homeschooling parents use them to gauge whether they're on track. So have various school districts since 1926. The downside? More truthiness than our self-esteem worshipping culture can handle.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:27 p.m.
REPLY

157. RECOMMEND2
158.
159.



160. **rjan**
LONG ISLAND, NY
161.

The US is consistently cited as falling behind the world in math skills etc. This is used to justify more spend on education (i.e. teachers salaries). How are the rating positions determined? I believe it is standardized tests. There seems to be a disconnect on several fronts.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:26 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND2

162.
163.
164.



165. **Mouse**
NYC
166.

I recently went to school for one year to prepare for a certification in a highly technical field. The classes were grueling, but nothing compared to the seven tests that I took over the next year.


I was changing fields and while studying for those tests was not the same as working in my field, many of the subjects I studied by rote were the difference between me being able to solve a problem or not. It was surprising how much I recalled even years later.

There is nothing wrong with tests and rote learning and there is something very much wrong with thinking every child is equally intelligent, as it is simply not true.

This does not mean children should be discarded, but to let children who are slow learners drag down the entire class is insane and is how we got to be so lenient in our educational standards, compared to the rest of the First World.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:24 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND3

167.
168.
169.


170. 
RC
MN
Verified

171.

The root cause of perceived problems in the US educational system is social dysfunction, including poverty, lack of family planning, and poor/absent parenting. Most teachers meet fairly high standards; focusing on teachers and tests is largely irrelevant and ignores the real problems facing our society.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:23 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND15

172.
173.
174.

175. 
Lori
New York
Verified

176.

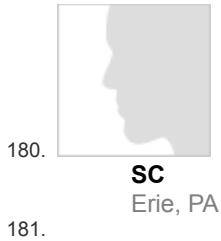
New Mexico is an interesting state demographically. It is 46% Hispanic, which are mainly original settlers (some families from 1500's) with a small percentage of Mexican immigrants. 10% Native American. Only 2% African-American. 1.5% Asian (including Tibetan, Japanese, etc.) Many ranchers/"cowboys."

It's a pretty conservative state, also populist, and there is much poverty, but quite liberal in more wealthy areas like Santa Fe, Los Alamos, parts of Albuquerque.

This is reflected in the politics and educational politics of the state. Skandera seems to represent the governor, Martinez, a law-and-order prosecutor, who comes from the southern, more remote and conservative area. I can see why they'd get opposition.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:10 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND3

177.
178.
179.



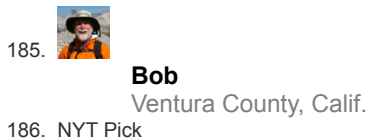
Once again the people who don't know what they are doing are telling the people who do how they should do it.

Once again we have a bunch of lawyers (congressmen), academics (who are incidentally the worst teachers), and basketball players who think they know how to teach.

I wouldn't want Ms. Skandera evaluating teachers anymore than I would want Kathleen Sebelius evaluating doctors.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:09 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND14

182.
183.
184.



It would be good to know the correlation between the grade "given" to a student and the student's score on a standardized test.

Many teachers hand out B's and A's like candy because the teacher believes that being liked is more important than leading the student to subject mastery.

Good teachers create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom while at the same time setting high expectations for students.

Any wise educator can walk into a classroom and in a few seconds know if the teacher is a good one or not.

Easy to determine; hard to quantify.

I'd give families more freedom to choose the teachers for children.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND3

187.

1. 
treabeton
new hartford, ny
- 2.

Totally with you on all points until the last sentence. Giving families the ability to select teachers is opening Pandora's Box. Often parents are the problem, not the solution. The administrators select and hire teachers. If you don't like the teacher(s), look to the administration, not to parents.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

- 3.
4. 
John
Houston
- 5.

Unfortunately, Bob, the actual, more significant correlation is between socioeconomic level and scores. If any grade inflation occurs, it's more likely because schools are pressured to keep up graduation rates in order to be successful, as determined by state and federal standards.

Good teachers, as you put it, can be in "good" schools or "bad" schools. Too bad the data will shine beautifully on teachers working in "good" schools and not so much in low socioeconomic schools where they desperately need our support - not our indignation and judgement.

Perhaps if we respected this profession, and education in general, as much as other careers, we can begin to have a reasonable conversation about it.

Really doubt that's going to happen. Actually, let's blame our teachers for the general public's indifference and ignorance.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND4

- 6.



189.

pearlsmom

Las Cruces, NM

190.

The comments from New Mexico teachers point to the numbing effects of poverty, dissolution, and broken families.

The socio-economic structure of the community counts heavily, too. If kids cannot witness the benefit of education, where can they get the motivation to succeed and move on to higher education? Too many are forced to accept part-time minimum-wage jobs, while struggling through high school in order to help keep their families afloat. There is little or no time for them to do school work outside the classroom which will help them academically. Single mothers of more than one child do not have the time or energy to focus on the scholastic success of each. And many of these mothers have not completed their educations, either. As we know, the effort to re-structure the ideal family dynamic in impoverished areas is mostly fruitless.

This is a "college town" which supports the high-tech installation at White Sands Missile Range. A community-based mentoring program to get high school students into corporate/government offices and labs could show them the possibilities. We would like to see more involvement in this effort.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:56 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND9

191.

192.

193.



194.

JEFF S

Brooklyn, NY

Verified

195.

Typical of what has been going on in this country all over the place where non educators who don't have a clue try to enforce their beliefs without the slightest basis of knowing what they're talking about. It starts with the Secretary of Education in this country, Mr. Duncan, who should have stuck to basketball and spent a lot of time destroying the Chicago schools. Then we have Ms. Rhee another big mouth who spent time in DC and knew nothing about education having little experience in the classroom. And let's not forget NYC where Joel Klein, who spent a couple of months teaching to dodge the draft during the Viet Nam period until he got into the National Guard but walks around telling true educators he was a teacher and knows what's best. And who can leave out Cathie Black a book publisher who Emperor Bloomberg put in charge of the NYC schools claiming the position of Chancellor should not be filled by an educator. Then we have had Mr. Walcott, a lackey if there ever was one.

But we go along begrudging the teachers, the vast vast majority of whom are doing a heroic job under very difficult circumstances. And in those places where these evaluation systems have been put in, the vast majority of teachers have been found to be at least effective if not highly effective. And when this happens, you get people like Bloomberg who rant that the evaluations cannot be true. Please. It's time we give the teachers credit not blame.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:56 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND12

196.



1.

MKM
New York

2.

@jeff S: the education professionals have had their day and we are 28th in the world.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND1

3.



4.

John
Houston

5.

MKM, according to Bloomberg, we don't even make the list of the 20 healthiest countries. We should blame doctors and the health industry. I'm with you.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

6.

197.



198.

A Teacher
Maryland

199.

The only people who benefit from these initiatives are the major corporations and rich business leaders who want to turn education into a profit center. They are not concerned with educating all of our children, only the rich ones.

We are seeing the beginning of a push which will further divide the rich from the rest of us, and which will result in an end to a free public education for every child.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:53 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND20

200.
201.
202.



203.

richdys
New York

204.

The problem with all of this is a general notion that we can reduce Education to a kind of Profit and Loss Sheet the way we do in business. You can't do it. Education is a subjective value that is difficult to quantify and the more you try to quantify it the more you distort and disfigure the actual thing you are measuring. Hopefully the pendulum is starting to swing back. Second the whole idea of local school boards is to insure local control of the curriculum. In this new world, whoever owns the test owns the curriculum. Particularly if Teacher Evaluations are going to be based on them. That is not a good thing. Finally there is a statistical concept called equivalency. Which is basically a complex set of protocols testing companies use to make sure the test they give in one year is equivalent to the test they give the next year. Very tough to do and has a high degree of error. Imagine a fitness test where we time students one year in the 100 yard dash. Next year due to an equivalency error we time them in the 100 yard dash but the track is actually 103 yards long. A 3% increase in proficiency would show up as no significant change year over year. That is the intrinsic error that can potentially show up when you try to compare student scores year over year. Its a bad system that relegates teachers to be glorified proctors and takes up valuable curricular time in the classroom. There is a better way to do this.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:53 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND8

205.
206.
207.



208.

Loyd Eskildson
Phoenix
Verified

209.

Those complaining would do well to read the analyses of PISA test results from China (and

presumably other East Asian nations) - they found much less spread between children from high- vs. low-socioeconomic backgrounds than in the U.S. The explanation - much higher parental expectations and support, across the board.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:53 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND7

210.
211.
212.



213.

W.A. Spitzer

Faywood, New Mexico

Verified

214. NYT Pick

There is nothing wrong with using standardized tests to measure reading comprehension and the ability of the students to solve math story problems. However, the only purpose of a standardized test is to provide a measure of where the students are. It does nothing to improve student performance. Along with appropriate standardized tests there needs to be a much more concerted effort to promote and require a dedicated commitment on the part of the students and their parents to take advantage of the generous educational opportunities being freely offered by the public school systems.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:42 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND11

215.
216.
217.



218.

Scott

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

219.

An inspirational teacher is often best at introducing new topic and perspectives which do not directly show up in standardized tests. Meanwhile a mediocre teacher may remain tightly focused on what is on the test and the students failed to learn anything not on the test.

Rating the teacher based upon the standardized test would falsely give too much credit to the mediocre teacher and not enough credit to the inspirational teacher. Thus, fix the evaluation process to use data mining techniques to evaluate the student's progress two or more years later to see which teacher laid a better foundation for future growth.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:42 p.m.

REPLY
RECOMMEND3

220.
221.
222.



223.

Paul
White Plains

224.

What is so difficult about preparing kids for a test? Teachers who oppose standardized testing always say it takes vast amounts of time away from teaching to prepre their students to take these tests. What is so hard about preparing kids to answer multiple chosie questions, write a coherent essay, or calculate a math problem? It's what they do in class when tested on course material. This excuse seems like a cover for lack of student learning, and for the inability of teachers to motivate their students to perform when tested.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:40 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND4

225.
226.
227.



228.

Darlene
Albuquerque, NM

229.

The proposed teacher evaluation system comes on the heels of a state-initiated school-level evaluation system that awarded each school a grade of A to F. No detailed explanation of how that system determines the school grades has ever been published. Instead, state legislators, school boards and the public were told that we were not statistically sophisticated enough to understand it. The individual school grades have varied widely from year to year, leading us dummies to suspect that the grades are based on a flawed analysis. Now the state is proposing an evaluation system for teachers that is even less transparent and fraught with far greater consequences for those who do poorly. Is it any wonder that opposition has grown?

New Mexico is one of the poorest states (43rd in personal income in 2010-11). The school population lives in households that are even poorer than the state average. Teacher pay is also quite low. Under Governor Martinez there have been cuts in financial support for K-12 education coupled with demands for changes in evaluation and, in the past few weeks, hints about linking teacher evaluation performance to pay. The only other major "reform" proposed by the governor has been to hold back third graders who fail to reach "proficiency." While that approach might work in an environment where those who were held back received intensive instruction to reach proficiency, there was no comparable proposal for resources to achieve that goal.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:36 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND15

230.
231.
232.



233.

Casual Observer
Los Angeles

234.

Observations can reveal poor teaching methods but not effective ones. Standardized testing to determine outcomes of the educational process can be extremely useful. However, to determine whether one teacher is doing a good or poor job requires a rather silly presumption, that years of educational experiences and social circumstances have no significant impact, that a competent teacher can overcome all of those obstacles for any cohort of kids. It comes from the presumption that all people are brutes who only seek their own pleasure and are incapable of being rewarded by outcomes where the beneficiaries are others. Making teachers eager to beat all others and to capture treasure that others are denied is a better motivator than any unselfish ones. The impact that one teacher has upon a class of students is not revealed by the outcomes of testing that class at the end of the year. Such outcomes reflect all the factors affecting the students over all the years up to and including the previous year. The notion that tests should be a determinant of one teacher's effectiveness is a poor use of the data.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:34 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND3

235.
236.
237.

1.



238.

Bob Az
Phoenix AZ

239.

On every job interview I go to, I always ask "Is the position's authority commensurate with its responsibilities?" Interviewers invariably chuckle, if not laugh out loud. If I were a teacher asking that, the interviewer would be laughing for a week.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:31 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND7

240.
241.
242.

243.



Unclebugs

Far West Texas

244.

Ms. Skandera may well be passionate and well-intentioned, but her limited view of how to fix the problem speaks volumes about her political agenda. As she may acknowledge the poverty factor, what steps is she and her boss doing to address that?

What New Mexico needs, I teach in New Mexico, is a plan to get students to do more in a state that ranks at the bottom in child services and poverty. What plan is there to address those problems so that these children can spend more time at school and focus on needed learning. The absence rate in some of my classes runs at 25 percent at times. We are at the mid-year point and already more than ten percent of the students are facing loss of credit for absences. Meanwhile, I have spent hours attempting to contact parents which is like a blind alley of wrong numbers, disconnected lines, and never answered phone messages. Under the new evaluation system only the returned calls or actual meetings count. I have made up to 30 calls in an evening with no success.

I work for a caring and motivational leader who says effort goes a long way. With our new system, effort doesn't seem to count that much.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:29 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND18

245.

246.

247.



OSS Architect

San Francisco

248.

249.

I have a friend who recently moved from California to New Mexico to continue her teaching career. Several times a day she receives obscene, sexual, hostile epithets from male students in her classes.

When she calls the parents for a parent-teacher discussion, if they show up at all, the father when confronted with what his son has said, usually says something like "I don't have a problem with that."

Boys and girls that are soon to be gang members view passing a test as humiliating them in front of their peers.

The reality is that teachers in low performing schools spend a large percentage of their time on

socialization and problems in the home. Children may come to class on Monday and they may not have eaten since school lunch on Friday because their parents are totally dysfunctional.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:29 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND22

250.



1.

kickerfrau
NC

2.

That is becoming the norm every where .

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.

RECOMMEND1

3.

251.



252.

NM teacher spouse
Los Alamos, NM

253.

As a spouse of a New Mexico school teacher, I can attest that not only are Skandera's policies bad for teachers, she has been quite dismissive of teachers' concerns when they are brought to her. In a recent meeting here in Los Alamos, the Acting Secretary said in response to concerns brought to her attention that "There are a lot of misconceptions out there." and "Change is hard." She simply does not want to hear what the teachers have to say.

KO points out one fundamental problem: If teachers' performance is to be measured (at least in part) by the performance of their students, then the Advanced Placement teachers are well-positioned to shine, but woe be to the teacher of special education students, some of whom, let's be honest, are never going to be high achievers. Does that mean that the Spec-Ed teachers are less valuable or do not work as hard? Of course not.

We also must admit that we do have some lousy teachers out there -- yes, even in Los Alamos. My kids have experienced some truly awful teaching. Will this new teacher evaluation system actually get rid of these bad teachers? If it did, I would consider that a win, but I have no expectation that this will happen. Apparently, no one has the heart to dismiss the little old lady who cannot remember if she is teaching French or Spanish to a particular class. I don't mean to be hard-hearted, but this is a real example of how students are being underserved, to put it nicely.

Keep the protests growing!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:26 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND9

254.



1.

Lori

New York

Verified

2.

Los Alamos is a very educated town, with its world-famous labs, but I suspect Ms. Skandera does not see this as her constituency. I find it appalling that she has never been a teacher, never been a school principal, never studied education, etc. yet sets policy for NM teachers. Like so many people these days with power over educators but rudimentary - if any - understanding of anything but "numbers."

Perhaps one of the Los Alamos scientists or mathematicians can explain to her why raw statistics are not meaningful, why you need context, multiple measures, etc. This is politics, not education.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:20 p.m.

RECOMMEND9

3.

255.



256.

Steve Fankuchen

Oakland CA

257.

The headline for the article is inaccurate. It is not the case that "A Push for Teacher Accountability Meets Resistance in New Mexico." Rather, it is that a particular approach to accountability is meeting resistance. The difference is important.

In education as in any "business", administrators/managers, especially those who have not come up through the ranks, tend not to understand the issues frontline people have to deal with. This is as true for education as it is in retail or any other business that depends on the attitudes and actions of myriad, diverse "customers."

In addition to the usual problems of turf battles, uninterested families, and general lack of respect for teachers and education in general, our society needs to have a discussion about the purpose of education in 21st century America. Is it primarily to train workers, enhance the life experience of

individuals, or create knowledgeable citizens, the backbone of a true democracy? At different times and different places in our history each has been emphasized.

The only time I can recall there was genuine respect for teachers and the teaching profession was after Sputnik sent a huge, shocked chill down the American spine. (And this was not just for math and science.) I had hoped that before it disbanded, the Soviet Union would land someone on Mars, perhaps once again prompting respect and support for education in our country..

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:23 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND20

258.
259.
260.



261.

Alexis 104
Newark, NJ

262.

Another sign of Education officials who fail to collaborate with educators, school boards, parents, and community towards meaningful learning for students.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:20 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND10

263.
264.
265.



266.

Rob
OH

267.

They should, actually. The biggest problem with school reform is the underlying ideology. It assumes that schools can correct for poverty (they can't) and that students are not responsible for their own learning (they are). Students don't work a job so they can go to school and learn. They should treat it like a job, of course that's easier said than done.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:16 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND15

268.
269.
270.

271.



Mauiyankee

Haiku, HI

272.

Why don't the teachers do like the sheriffs and refuse to comply with the law?

Doesn't each individual get to interpret the Constitution and statutes and regulations on their own?

Can't the teachers claim religious freedom and refuse to abide by the standards?

Why can't they stand their ground?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:16 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND4

273.

274.

275.



Vox

NY

276.

277.

High expectations for students and teachers are good, "Core" standards may (or may not) be good for education, but reliance on standardized and multiple-guess testing is definitely NOT good for education or learning!

Another Fool's Gold short-cut that somehow benefits the private very much FOR-PROFIT testing industry!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:15 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND9

278.

279.

280.



Howard

Los Angeles

281.

Verified

282.

Those who can, teach; whose who cannot, design schemes purporting to evaluate teachers.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:02 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND52

283.
284.
285.



286.

ibLoG
Canada

287.

America needs to focus less on quantity testing and more on quality teaching. Quantity testing benefit mostly corporations, not students.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND12

288.



1.

tecknick
NY

2.

America needs to focus on quality parenting and not passing the responsibility of their child's education solely onto the schools. Quality parenting will benefit the children and then the schools.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:32 p.m.
RECOMMEND8

3.

289.



290.

DemocracyNow
East Coast

291.

It's hard for us lay people to tell whether teachers are right about the tests or whether they are simply having a tough time dealing with the accountability that we in the private sector have known for years. Tenure can be a very comfortable thing while, in the private sector these days, you're always looking over your shoulder and worrying about keeping your job.

I do know that in setting annual goals, private sector workers usually want to be accountable for projects only where they have some control over all the elements. Try taking that to the world of public education, where a lot of teachers have little control over students and no control over parents. Every time I talk to a young public school teacher regardless of geographic location, they tell me two things: 1) they get little or no support from their administrators on disciplinary issues, and 2) they either get opposition or little participation from parents when they bring up learning or behavioral issues involving individual students. They're supposed to teach in raucous and rowdy classrooms (where students are allowed to have cellphones) and/or they are ignored by parents or, much worse, threatened with legal action when the parents feel the little darlings haven't been treated properly.

Teachers do need more accountability, but they also need the proper tools and environment to do the job right.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND34

292.



1.

Mike L

New York, NY

2.

It's no different than in the private sector - you control some things but not all of them. You take credit for the good that happens even if you're only responsible for a little piece of it. And you take the blame when things go badly even if it's mostly not your fault.

This is how every other profession works. I don't know why teachers are such delicate flowers that they insist that they should be the exception.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.

RECOMMEND

3.



4.

DemocracyNow

East Coast

5.

It's very different from the private sector. Let me translate the public school experience for you, as it has been relayed to me by a number of teachers.

Imagine holding a very important meeting of your subordinates and most of them, instead of paying attention to you, are texting one another or their friends outside the company. Imagine giving a subordinate a bad performance review and the next day, he/she shows up with a lawyer and you can't do anything about it. Imagine asking a junior colleague for a report that's due and getting a string of four-letter words instead. . . and then going to your superior to complain only to be told there's little that can be done.

I'm no defender of the ills that plague teaching. I believe tenure should be abolished and teachers should receive merit pay. I'm just not sure how they should be judged.

The simple fact is that you can't fire poor-performing, disruptive students or their ignorant, uninvolved parents. That's what's different.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
RECOMMEND3

6.

293.



294.

Edgar
New Mexico

295.


As in all things, there are 2 sides to every story. When Ms. Skandera came on board, one of the blackest marks against her was that she had never been in the classroom. Expensive consultants were hired, a difficult school evaluation system was created (with many errors....including failing a school because of a graduation rate when there was not yet a senior class), and the difficulty of anyone getting in touch to ask questions of anyone in her office. At the beginning of her tenure, many teachers were RIFed (reduction in force). AP teachers at the secondary level had over 35 students to a classroom etc. etc. The list is huge. I am sorry, but Ms. Skandera has done little to work with teachers of this state. The governor opts for photo shoots with the young ones, but they do little to see our communities that face among one major item....poverty. We do have educational issues. We know. We need someone who will work with our schools.....not mandate expensive tests to enrich the coffers of the consultants and testing companies to show us how bad we are.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND45

296.


297.

298.

299. 
haynesa
Las Cruces
300.

I am a teacher in New Mexico and I have been teaching mostly low income students for 15 years. There are many obstacles to student success, but I have seen excellent teaching help students excel. Parental involvement plays a HUGE role.

While I am not crazy about 50% of my evaluation coming from the test, my main concern is the roll-out of the End of Course Exams and the changing of graduation requirements. We are just finishing the fall round of EoCs and I have lost significant class time with my Biology students because they were pulled out of my class to take other EoCs. Plus, those other EoC's ran over test time so I lost actual time in class plus losing actual students. The framework for the EoC was released two weeks before the exam. They still have not released cut scores for this round and somehow they expect we will use these scores as our final exam grade. Last year, the PED decided in October that they would roll out the EoC, without field testing, for implementation in December. This whole change has been haphazard at best. Information changes on a weekly basis. The English EoC was released with numerous spelling and grammatical errors. Let the PED get their act together, then maybe they can start to lead us in one direction, instead of changing their minds weekly.

301. Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND20

1. **CWM**
Central West Michigan
2.

Thanks for your observations. What is the PED accountability in the chaos and errors? If student performance on exams is allegedly a measure of teacher performance, then it is obvious that teacher performance on evaluations is a measure of the Secretary of Education performance & accountability. If it's such a good idea, then Ms Skandera will certainly step up to lead by example.

3. Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:55 p.m.
RECOMMEND
302.

303.



Data Analyst
Seattle

304.

Would be informative to see a more detailed analysis of the D.C. and Tennessee data. Are the youth in those states and grades comparable to the youth in New Mexico? Are there other factors that could account for the differences? How many other states are there that did not report significant improvement?

Is anyone evaluating this data to determine if the results/differences are statistically significant?

It seems irresponsible to report on data as a driver for changes without covering these questions.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.

REPLY
RECOMMEND4

305.



1. **Jane Mars**
Stockton, CA

2.

I've never seen a single thing that suggests that they do anything but look at the test scores themselves. I've never seen anything that suggests that they run real regression analysis across a whole district, gathering data on a range of variables likely to affect a child's performance, in order to isolate the effect of the school and the specific teacher. It always looks like they are just looking at raw test scores. It's hard to tell if that is bad reporting or what they are actually doing (which would be insane).

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:33 p.m.

RECOMMEND4

3.

306.



307.

Rob
OH

308.

Another politician with zero teaching experience telling teachers how to do their job. We've seen this before.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:52 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND45

309.
310.
311.



312.

Kevin Cothren
High Falls, NY

313.

Holding teachers accountable for student performance makes about as much sense as blaming doctors for diseases.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:51 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND43

314.



1.

Buster
Idaho

2.

But it makes more sense than your comment, and I AM a teacher!

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.

RECOMMEND5

3.



4.

John K
Queens

5.

I second Buster's comment. Teachers most definitely should be responsible for student performance. Otherwise what are we sending our kids to school for?

The analogy is flawed; a disease is (typically) and acquired condition, which doctors attempt to cure. Lack of education is where we all start. It is not a disease but a limitation, and is not cured, but rather overcome by teaching.

Also "holding accountable" is not the same as "blaming".

No one never learned you that?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:55 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

6.



7.

jbo
ok

8.

I think what Kevin means is that without students willing to learn, to read, and to work-- rather than using their cell phones and gazing vacantly about in class, refusing to take part in their own educations (and that does happen), there's a limited amount a teacher can do. Until Americans decide that they are willing to read again, and to study, not much else will work--and it does bear some similarity with a doctor's advising patients to exercise or lay down the triple cheeseburgers and being ignored, or derided.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND1

9.

315.



316.

WJG
Canada

317.

If you evaluate teachers by how well students do on standardized tests, then student performance on standardized tests will improve and the administrators will be able to stand proud knowing that they have improved the standing of their school district in rankings that depend on standardized tests.

Meanwhile the students who have been drilled on learning what will be on the standardized tests will go on to work or advanced education, both situations where the ability to write a standardized test is irrelevant, if not a liability.

So why are these initiatives a good idea?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:51 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND16

318.



1.

Buster
Idaho

2.

They are a good idea because when it's all over you can point fingers and assign blame or congratulations (usually blame). It is, first and foremost, a way for state and local school boards to cover their rear ends for not providing the necessary resources to educate so many children of poverty for success in the 21st Century.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.

RECOMMEND16

3.

319.



320.

Honeybee
Dallas

321.

If these tests were beneficial to kids, students in top private schools would take them.

These tests are only beneficial to the people selling the tests and the "reformers" who get the kickbacks for promoting them.

Michelle Rhee loves the tests but sends at least 1 of her daughters to a very expensive private school in TN where the tests are not given.

No child needs to sit testing hour after hour after hour to assess a teacher's effectiveness. That job should be done by the principal--not students being used as unpaid slaves by the testing companies and "reformers."

Here's what the tests always show: poor kids test worse than rich kids. What a shocker. Teachers cannot overcome chaotic homes, drug-using parents who won't take the child to get free replacement glasses, domestic violence, siblings in gangs, no adult supervision, etc.

Sure--hold the teacher responsible for low test scores. See how that works out. My prediction: the Broad people, the Rhees of the world, Pearson, TFA--all will get richer and richer while poor kids

get...wait for it...more tests.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:50 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND78

322.



1.

Pat B.

Blue Bell PA

2.

And I am so sick of the discussion being framed as 'teacher accountability. Teachers value accountability, fair judgement and positive direction as professionals in any other industry. Constant one-size fits all standardized testing has little to do with what teachers can realistically be held accountable for. I have been a teacher- and a successful one, judging from my 'reviews.' I have been a mid-level corporate manager for more than 30 years now.

All of you who work in the private sector screaming for more teacher accountability should be fine then if similar standards are applied to your jobs. While I may get a bonus if my company does well, I don't lose my job based on 'performance' if overall revenue/profit/stock prices are down. That's because no matter how well anyone does their job, no one person can be accountable for another person's (or organization's) success. If we want to see real accountability, perhaps any Principal or Administrator whose school doesn't show immediate improvement should be removed.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.

RECOMMEND4

3.



4.

JMC

Huntington

5.

Mayor Bloomberg never sent his kids to public school, yet he was the "education mayor".

Dec. 17, 2013 at 4:49 p.m.

RECOMMEND

6.

323.



324.

Breener

Cincinnati

325.

There is no doubt that an increase in test-taking will yield better test-takers. The teachers will do their job, will do as they are told, and will make sure that their students are prepared -- to take an objective test. But why does New Mexico want to raise a generation of test-takers? Are colleges asking for better test-takers? Are companies looking for test-takers? Do entrepreneurs, historically, excel at test-taking?

Teachers know that deep, critical thinking is almost impossible to measure with a standardized test. So where is this testing emphasis coming from?

The cynic in me knows that someone else must be benefiting from creating, producing, and scoring all of these tests. Perhaps the Times could look into who is profiting from our current assessment era?


326. Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:49 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND27

1. 
Nowvoyager
CoscobCT

2.

The College Board is the company that profits most from standardized testing--- it's their business and they've somehow convinced states and many colleges that standardized tests are important.

3. Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:08 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

4. 
Lori
New York
Verified

5.

Pearson too.

6. Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:24 p.m.
RECOMMEND3

327.

328.



Anon

Washington, DC

329.

Yay, the continued infiltration of our public education system by the Teach for America-brainwashed, finance industry-funded, urban renewal-related, very-young, uneducated-in-actual-education-theory acolytes. How's that working out so far, hmmm?

Our public education system certainly needs improvement, but not at the expense of solid education principles or respect for the professionals that power our public education system -- the teachers!

Go after corruption in administration. That's where the problem lies.

That's where it's always been, and it continues with these new TFA yahoos.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:39 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND22

330.

331.

332.



CaffinatedOne

Virginia

333.

334.

Focusing on teacher "accountability" is certainly a useful way to avoid dealing with the underlying challenges that many struggling students face. It's easier to blame teachers than to recognize and try to address the poverty and instability that plague many of these students. That would be tough, of course, and would likely require some structural changes that the elite would rather not see happen, so it's easier to just blame teachers.

I guess that it's a win-win for "reformers" since they can both distract from inequality/poverty issues and attack public sector workers and unions all with one push. Additionally, there's an added "win" if the same "reformers" can manage to siphon off public money into for-profit schools as well.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:37 p.m.

REPLY

RECOMMEND62

335.

336.

337.



338.

Omerta15
New Jersey

339.

I am a public school teacher, a 28-year veteran. I am all in favor of rigorous performance indicators for teachers. The success of our society in the next 20 and 30 years shall be driven by the success of the public schools today, and teachers simply must do their jobs well. Still, I'm wondering what actual powers teachers will have to prevent the frivolous absences of their students. After all, if my family's financial security depends on the learning outcomes of my students, will I have the power to say no (and have "no" stick) when a family emails me and says, "Please give Kyle his work for next week. We are going on a trip to the islands." The answer I SHOULD be able to give is, "No I wont. Kyle is learning court cases on habeas corpus during the Civil War. I need him here all week. Sorry, but I insist that Kyle be in my class." I want to ask, point blank: Will a teacher have the actual power to refuse these requests by saying that our paychecks depend on the students' learning outcomes? Assuming the answer is "no," (be honest, you know teachers will NEVER be given that power), how can teachers accept any reform package that holds only THEM accountable? NJEA to the rescue, please.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND49

340.

[READ ALL 8 REPLIES](#)



1.

Omerta15
New Jersey

2.

well, Kevin, thank God for my union's lobbying power.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

3.



4.

Maryann
Boston, MA

5.

If I were a kid, and I wanted to stick it to the teacher, I would just fail that test.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:48 p.m.
RECOMMEND2

6.



7.

Pat B.
Blue Bell PA

8.

Totally agree. And the power to haul parents into the schools for remedial counseling when they aren't accountable for their most critical role. And maybe the power to vote out Administrators who are ineffective. I can't believe what a sham this particular approach to accountability is...

Dec. 17, 2013 at 3:25 p.m.
RECOMMEND

9.

341.



342.

pepperman33
Philadelphia

343.

At a time where the US students continue to rank lower in reading and math we must hold our teachers accountable. Many Asian countries who measure progress on standardized tests for students and teachers, have surpassed our country's student performance. Let's not mitigate measurable results of performance to accommodate the teachers' union. Education is about the product, not the producers of the product.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND6

344.

[READ ALL 4 REPLIES](#)



1.

Honeybee
Dallas

2.

You are woefully uninformed.

Those Asian countries you cite? Did you know that they test only a few students (percentage-wise) and only the students who have met specific requirements? They aren't testing their poor and their rural students.

We take everyone who shows up in our public schools and we test all of them--even the Special Education kids.

Wake up.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:56 p.m.
RECOMMEND37

3.



4.

WCB
South Seaville, NJ

5.

How about holding parents responsible? It is their responsibility to make sure their children do the work expected of them. Asian students do better because they are driven at home, perhaps too stringent at times, but the teacher needs this reinforcement to succeed. Ask any school administrator how low parent attendance is on parent - teacher nights. Perhaps parents could take away the xbox and MAKE their kids do some reading instead of blasting away at zombies for hours and hours.

As for standardized tests, the vast majority of politicians that mandate them would fail miserably if they took one. Needless to say, testing is not the answer. Blaming the teacher is the easy way out, and has become the norm. Very sad.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:57 p.m.
RECOMMEND14

6.



7.

CaffinatedOne
Virginia

8.

As has been documented recently, if one controls for poverty, the US scores near the top of international PISA tests (which the '09 data came out recently for and is thus the source of recent hand-wringing). Unsurprisingly, since we have a far higher percentage of tested students in poverty, said students bring down our averages. When one makes a like-for-like comparison between schools with low poverty rates, it turns out the that US does really well. Education "accountability" reform isn't going to do anything to fix that.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 2:03 p.m.
RECOMMEND7

9.

345.



346.

Grossness54

West Palm Beach, Florida

347.

'Accountability' for what, exactly? Just what is the purpose of all this testing, anyway? To turn our public schools into Asian-style 'teach to the test' institutions stressing cramming and rote memorisation? One thing that's been sorely lacking in all this curriculum and testing debate is a good look at the tests themselves and what they really measure. Without that, our policy makers are really acting like the six blind men who were trying to describe an elephant. Are our schools in the business of teaching students what they need to know and how to solve problems and understand what they read, or will they be used mainly to weed out those who somehow don't fit into the evolving world of work, whatever THAT may turn out to be?

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND6

348.

349.

350.



351.

Dave

Ocala, Florida

352.

How many of these folks who have never taught and never will can we bring in to lead education? Insane on the best day.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.
REPLY
RECOMMEND34

353.

354.

355.



KO
Seattle

357.

Sounds good if you can get all the bright kids in your classroom...

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.

[REPLY](#)
[RECOMMEND5](#)

358.



1. **tecknick**
NY

2.

Not necessarily ... target scores are very hard to achieve if the students are performing at a very high level to begin with.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 1:40 p.m.

[RECOMMEND](#)

3.

359.



Abel Fernandez
Albuquerque, NM

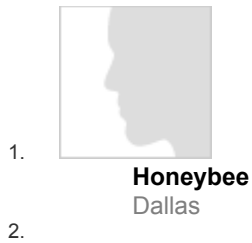
361.

She will turn teachers and students into robots who pass tests and will continue to ignore the fact that New Mexico is a very poor state which ranks low on most quality of life issues. High test scores don't make bright students who will go on to college or university. Students will learn how to memorize, not to think.

Dec. 17, 2013 at 12:33 p.m.

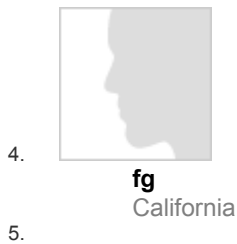
[REPLY](#)
[RECOMMEND21](#)

362.



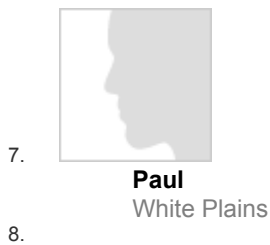
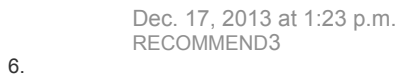
I believe MIT recently concluded the same thing: high test scores do NOT translate to actual, retained learning, nor do they predict preparedness or academic success.

But without the tests, reformers and test companies would go broke.



Memorizing is the beginning of learning. Thinking comes as one matures. When your child memorizes the alphabet, they haven't a clue why.

If we don't educate our children then surely they will be robots!



The first step in learning is to assimilate and be able to repeat basic facts. The same holds true in any subject. If you can't learn the basics, no amount of advanced educational theory will help. Without tests, there is no way to measure successful learning, no matter what educators and liberals would have us believe.



9.

363.