

The IBM Cloud is the cloud for business.

The IBM Cloud is engineered to help deliver on the demands of data-intensive businesses. The cloud for business is **made with IBM.**

Tap into the IBM Cloud
Learn more →



The Atlantic



Get *The Atlantic* on Facebook  962k

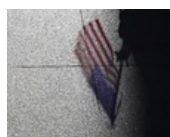
POLITICS ▾ BUSINESS ▾ TECH ▾ ENTERTAINMENT ▾ HEALTH ▾ **EDUCATION ▾** SEXES ▾ NATIONAL ▾ GLOBAL ▾ VIDEO ▾ MAGAZINE ▾

JUST IN The Man Who Made Louis Vuitton, Louis Vuitton

IN FOCUS | FEATURES | APPS | BOOKS | NEWSLETTERS | EVENTS | SUBSCRIBE



The Food Gap Is Widening
By James Hamblin



Steven Sotloff and the Stories He Told
By Uri Friedman



Images of Burning Man
By Alan Taylor



The Moral Panic Around American Teachers
By Noah Berlatsky

The Common Core Is Tough on Kids With Special Needs

KATHARINE BEALS | FEB 21 2014, 7:46 AM ET

Further showing what special needs students are up against are the sample tasks. For R-L 8.2 above, we have:

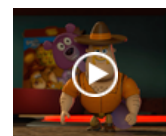
Students *summarize the development* of the morality of Tom Sawyer in Mark Twain's novel of the same name and analyze its connection to themes of accountability and authenticity by noting how it is conveyed *through characters, setting, and plot*.

Now imagine a 14-year-old who comprehends language at a fourth-grade level. What combination of assistive technology and supplemental material could possibly provide sufficient access to how accountability and authenticity play out in the complex paragraphs of *Tom Sawyer*? What, other than years of remediation in reading comprehension, could get her through highly relevant sentences like this one, in which Tom takes a lashing from Schoolmaster Dobbins for an infraction actually committed by Becky Thatcher?

Inspired by the splendor of his own act, he took without an outcry the most merciless flogging that even Mr. Dobbins had ever administered; and also received with indifference the added cruelty of a command to remain two hours after school should be dismissed—for he knew who would wait for him outside till his captivity was done, and not count the tedious time as loss, either.

What, short of simplifying the text or spoon-feeding its meaning to her, will it take for our language-impaired 14-year-old to grasp this 67-word sentence, with

VIDEO



A Delightful, Pixar-Inspired Cartoon

An action figure and his reluctant sidekick trek across a kitchen in search of treasure.

its complex syntax, words like “flaying,” “indifference,” and an outdated sense of “should,” and the inference needed to grasp the contextual meaning of “captivity”? One can only imagine how tough things become once the student gets to Shakespeare—one author that the standards appear to mandate.

Let’s turn to another eighth-grade reading goal, R-L 8.3:

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Now imagine the challenge for a student with autism—even one whose vocabulary and syntax are age appropriate. Autism is largely a social disability, with key deficits in understanding character and motivation and in drawing inferences from dialogues—in real life as much as in reading. Where does the teacher of an autistic student even begin?

Some special-education professionals believe they have the answer. In an article entitled “[Core State Standards for Students with Autism](#): the Challenge for Educators,” published last year in the journal *Teaching Exceptional Children*, we find Stephen, an eighth grader with Asperger’s Syndrome (mild autism) who is struggling to meet the R-L 8.3. The authors describe a goal-aligned text in which a boy stops going to school after being habitually bullied and ostracized. When asked why the boy quits school, Stephen can’t answer. Presumably, his Asperger’s-related social deficits make it hard for him to recognize the students’ bullying and ostracizing as such, and to grasp the emotional and behavioral effects on the boy.

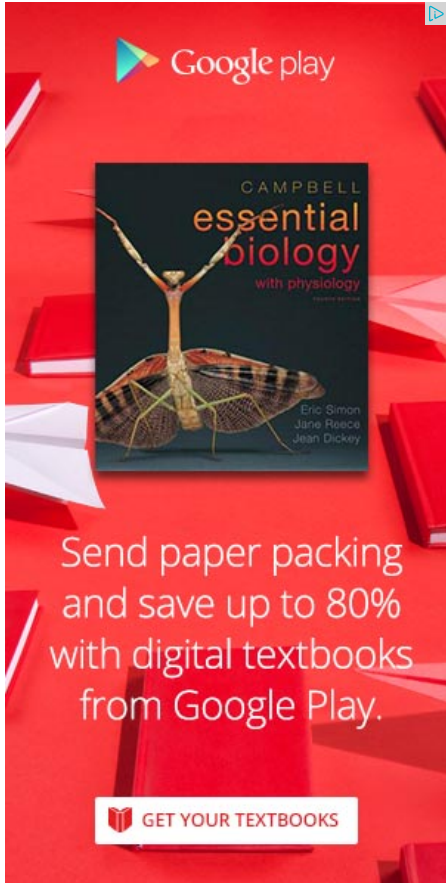
How, the authors ask, can Stephen’s teacher help him meet R-L 8.3? By creating a comic strip that shows the characters’ thoughts, including a thought bubble for Matt that reads “I am a loser. Everyone hates me. I am never going back to school!”

In other words, the teacher can help Stephen meet the standard by giving away the answer!

But the answer to one specific configuration of dialogue, action, and character does not teach a child with autism how *any* particular lines of dialogue reveal traits or provoke actions in characters. If it did, we’d have screaming headlines about a simple cure for one of the core deficits of autism.

Not all students will succeed with America’s Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and/or Shakespeare. But well-meaning aspirations for special-needs children can foster deep and widespread denial—in particular among educators facing high-stakes standards. One of the special-education professors quoted in *Education Week*, for example, asks, in reference to students with severe cognitive disabilities, “Why would we take a whole class of citizens and say you don’t get to learn the standards that we say are most important for everyone?”

“Most important for everyone”: That’s the real problem. Forcing all students into the same, age-pegged standards deprives atypical students of optimized learning opportunities and attainable goals at their level of developmental readiness. Far better for an eighth grader who is four years behind in language to read texts with vocabulary and sentence complexity just above her current skill level than to struggle through 67-word sentences in *Tom Sawyer* using story boards as crutches. Far better for a student with autism to engage with simplified social scenarios that he can work through on his own than to muddle through complex



The advertisement features a red background with a central image of the textbook cover for "Campbell's Essential Biology with Physiology" by Eric Simon, Jane Reece, and Jean Dickey. The cover shows a detailed illustration of a dragonfly. Text on the ad promotes digital textbooks from Google Play, stating "Send paper packing and save up to 80% with digital textbooks from Google Play." and includes a button that says "GET YOUR TEXTBOOKS".

WRITERS

Rebecca J. Rosen

The Man Who Made Louis Vuitton, Louis
Vuitton 5:21 PM ET

Uri Friedman

Steven Sotloff and the Stories He Told
4:43 PM ET

Jeffrey Goldberg

'Steven Was Brave and Unlucky, but He Was
Not Stupid' 3:15 PM ET

James Hamblin

The Food Gap Is Widening 2:12 PM ET

James Fallows

Annals of the Security State, Presidential-
Vacations Edition 1:57 PM ET

Derek Thompson

The Bone Clocks: David Mitchell's Almost-
Perfect Masterpiece 8:14 AM ET

ones that need to be explained to him piecemeal. As any of my special-ed student teachers can tell you, and as research has shown, restricting students to curricula beyond their cognitive capacities substantially lowers their achievement.

The purported goal of the Common Core is success for all students. But success for all requires openness towards cognitive diversity, and isn't so easily standardized.

<< 1 2

SINGLE PAGE

134 JUMP TO COMMENTS



KATHARINE BEALS is a lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and an adjunct professor at the Drexel University School of Education. She is the author of *Raising a Left-Brain Child in a Right-Brain World: Strategies for Helping Bright, Quirky, Socially Awkward Children to Thrive at Home and at School*.

ALL POSTS

AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

12 Films You Wont Watch Twice
Moviesum

Warren Buffett Reveals How Anyone With \$40 Could Become A Millionaire
The Motley Fool

There Are 7 Types of English Last Names — Which One Is Yours?
Ancestry.com

Building a Timeless Wardrobe
The Line

If You Have One Of These 7 Credit Cards You Most Likely Have Excellent Credit
Next Advisor Daily

North America's Energy Opportunity Explained
Goldman Sachs | Vox

Why Amanda Seyfried Has The Best Celebrity Instagram
Refinery29

Parents Find Deceased Daughter's Letter to her Future Self
The Today Show

AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

12 Films You Wont Watch Twice
Moviesum

Warren Buffett Reveals How Anyone With \$40 Could Become A Millionaire
The Motley Fool

There Are 7 Types of English Last Names — Which One Is Yours?
Ancestry.com

Building a Timeless Wardrobe
The Line

If You Have One Of These 7 Credit Cards You Most Likely Have Excellent Credit
Next Advisor Daily

North America's Energy Opportunity Explained
Goldman Sachs | Vox

Why Amanda Seyfried Has The Best Celebrity Instagram
Refinery29

Parents Find Deceased Daughter's Letter to her Future Self
The Today Show



Emma Green

Violence Among the Amish 7:00 AM ET

Peter Beinart

The Unbearable Emptiness of a New York Times Op-Ed SEP 1, 2014

MORE IN



How Middle East Studies Professors Handle Bias in the Classroom
TERRANCE ROSS



Students Aren't Getting Enough Sleep—School Starts Too Early
JESSICA LAHEY



How to Teach Kids About What's Happening in Ferguson
MARCIA CHATELAIN





The Mystery of St. Louis's Veiled Prophet

SCOTT BEAUCHAMP | 1:26 PM ET



The Origins of the Anger Face

CARI ROMM | 12:48 PM ET



The Shock of Amish Violence

EMMA GREEN | 7:00 AM ET



Figuring Out The Bone Clocks

DEREK THOMPSON | 8:14 AM ET



A Fascinating Short Film About the Multiverse

If life is a series of infinite possibilities, what does it mean to be alive?

f Like

610

g+1



Elsewhere on the web (Sponsored Links)

- These are the Girls You Marry vs. the Girls You Hook Up With (RantLifestyle)
- Book Lovers Are Asking: Why Didn't I Find Out About This Website Sooner? (The BookBub Bulletin)
- Oprah's Palace In The Bahamas Will Leave You In Awe (Lonny Magazine)
- Tiny House Fits a Family in 196 Square Feet (Dwell)
- Colleges and Universities that Offer Free Online Courses (Education Portal)

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

After you comment, click Post. If you're not already logged in you will be asked to log in or register.

134 Comments

The Atlantic

Login

Sort by Oldest

Share Favorite



Join the discussion...

MOST POPULAR

- 1 Violence Among the Amish
- 2 What's Wrong With Checking Out Stolen Nude Photos of Celebrities
- 3 In Maryland, a Soviet-Style Punishment for a Novelist
- 4 The Food Gap Is Widening
- 5 Why Do Americans Love to Blame Teachers?
- 6 Burning Man 2014
- 7 Man Arrested While Picking Up His Kids: 'The Problem Is I'm Black'
- 8 Afghanistan: The Long Withdrawal
- 9 The Secret Pot-Growing Operations in America's Cornfields
- 10 The Dark Side of Almond Use

New for Members!

Now you can
Buy & Schedule Service from
top-rated local providers.

Angie's list. Join Now!

JUST IN

The Man Who Made Louis Vuitton, Louis Vuitton

REBECCA J. ROSEN

Steven Sotloff and the Stories He Told

URI FRIEDMAN

'Steven Was Brave and Unlucky, but He Was Not Stupid'

JEFFREY GOLDBERG



JoshSD · 6 months ago

Two words... parent choice.

All of these "standards" are simply a substitute for allowing parents and students to decide for themselves if a school is right for them (like they do in college). If a parent of a student with autism sees that school A is making wonderful progress with what is important to the parent, does anyone really think the parent isn't going to choose to send their child there if they have the option to do so without losing their government funding of the education?

You can measure a student's progress a million different ways, but none is going to (on the whole) be as good as the opinion of a caring parent. Every system has flaws, trusting parents is the least bad option.

NCLB... Common Core... Whatever... Unless teachers and schools just want to be handed a check and not have any way for the public to judge the job they are doing, you have to either allow parents to choose or you have to use a standard measurement. What is this magical third option? How well has it worked when we don't have a standard measure of performance and people are essentially forced (if you can't afford a private school, you are forced) into a single service provider? I don't care what "industry" you are talking about, that is a disaster waiting to happen.

14 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



andrelot → JoshSD · 6 months ago

How do we deal with the many parents who don't have the intellectual ability to assess the learning process of their children, then? Do their children just languish - perpetuating the cycle?

10 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → andrelot · 6 months ago

They would have the same chance at getting into a good school as they do today. Random chance based on their location.

Don't just snipe at other people. Like I said, there is no perfect answer. What is your idea? It is lazy to just complain about programs without offering a solution of your own.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Location is NOT random. The US is a highly mobile society. I have personally moved for school districts before, and I mean states not just locally. At a sacrifice of salary and leaving friends and family for what I thought was important for my family. I have also seen locations work hard to improve their schools successfully.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

That is a fair point. "Random" probably wasn't the best choice. My point still holds that children of "parents who don't have the intellectual ability to assess the learning process of their children" would be no worse off than they are today. Your point seems to strengthen mine.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Yeah, "parental choice" as you said is the key. Parents (should) know if a school district is good or bad for their particular situation. And a school may test poorly or have bad graduations rates, yet be the perfect situation for THEIR kid. For the uncaring parent, a standardized test or way of learning has not effect on their decisions. Common Core will hurt as many kids as it helps who are in these situations.

By allowing schools freedom, you have a much better chance at helping more kids than any standardized teaching method will.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Joanie → andrelot · 6 months ago

No, you have to rely on school psychologists and special ed staff including special ed teachers and SLPs, to do it for them. I have met many of these professionals, who are underpaid and overworked, in my own public school district and been amazed by the magic they can do. They haven't been educated on hidden disabilities such as high-functioning autism, but most are eager to learn from educated parents. There are only a few bad eggs who refuse to let go of the belief that "The problem with that child is his parents don't discipline him and he's trying to push my buttons." We're working on getting those people OUT. If you're lucky to live in a district with high parent involvement, the special ed parents are looking out for the kids of noninvolved special ed students as well as other students who aren't functioning well. I can't tell you how much work the highly involved special ed parents in my district do, working with each other and the school special ed teams, to make things better for everyone. That said, ignorant, arrogant educators who push Common Core and other, earlier standards that don't account for special ed needs have to be educated or get out of the way!

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



heartprivacy → JoshSD · 6 months ago

So if parents don't see a need for their child to learn how to read, then that should be A-OK and we should let them make that choice?

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → heartprivacy · 6 months ago

- 1) That is going to be a very rare thing. Much less common than crappy teacher in crappy schools simply failing to teach a child to read.
- 2) What prevents that now?
- 3) Don't just snipe at other people. Like I said, there is no perfect answer. What is your idea? It is lazy to just complain about programs without offering a solution.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Daniel Adam Wittingslow → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Hey, people can question your solution. You're not above criticism because you're brainstorming.

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → Daniel Adam Wittingslow · 6 months ago

I didn't say not to question. I am saying that in a world without perfect solutions it is useless to look at any program in a vacuum without comparing it to an alternative. People that don't want to purpose their alternative make it impossible to evaluate anything.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Daniel Adam Wittingslow → JoshSD · 6 months ago

I think heartprivacy and andrelot have perfectly valid questions that require addressing, and you seem to be palming their concerns out of hand for 'sniping'. How else would one frame a criticism?

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → Daniel Adam Wittingslow · 6 months ago

"How else would one frame a criticism?"

By saying, "This is the system I think we should use. It doesn't have this problem and yours does. What benefits does your

have this problem and yours does. What benefits does your suggestion have that offsets the downside it has compared to mine."

Again, unless I understand your reference point, there is no way to even begin a discussion. You have to have an alternative to compare something to. If they are suggesting the status quo, they need to say that so I can properly contrast the two. No policy can be judged without an alternative to compare it to.

I even tried to address this in my original statement by saying it isn't a perfect solution. It is the least bad solution. Give me a solution to contrast it with and I can address their concerns, but without a contrasting solution, I can't accurately account for the impact my solution would have on their concerns. My solution could quite well be (and this is what I have been saying the _____

[see more](#)

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → heartprivacy · 6 months ago

Sadly, yest that is their choice. Always has been, always will be. Common Core does nothign to fix this, nothign to prevent this. What is does is prevent schools from making choices that can address these kids using the best methods possible.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Joanie → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Let's have a choice of CURRICULA and DELIVERY and TEACHER, not schools. I live in the land of vouchers--believe me, those charter schools only perform as well as the public schools and then only because they cherry pick students. Special ed students do NOT get the services they need in those schools. Once parents realize that, they go back to the public schools, which have to take their child even though now the money has been spent by the charter school. And yes, the public schools do as well as charter/voucher schools despite high numbers of special ed kids (20 percent of Milwaukee Public Schools' students have IEPs--research the disaster voucher schools have been in Milwaukee). Also, in some cases, the schools DO know more than the parents--this is common when parents don't even show up for IEP meetings. And there are special ed parents who are looking out for all the kids, including the special ed kids who don't have involved parents--and yes, you'll find these parents involved in improving their public schools. We need to work together, and that means breaking up this education culture that produces the Arne Duncan types who are arrogant and ignorant. That's the real challenge!

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anna · 6 months ago

You are correct that the Common Core standards will prevent teaching students whose ability level is mismatched with their calendar age while most schools continue to insist that calendar age is the single most important criteria in determining the class or grade to which a student is assigned.

Both the requirements of NCLB and Common Core become much easier to meet if you group students for instruction in each school subject based primarily on their mastery of earlier material instead of on their calendar age. So you cognitively impaired student should be learning to meet the 4th grade standards his or her reading level prepares them to master. An autistic student without serious language impairment can be taught to recognize by means of repeated exposure to "scripts" which reveal the thoughts of a character to recognize how dialog and actions further the plot or reveal the character's emotional state. As in, yes, the teacher must tell the student the answers over and over, and point out the similarities of the situations depicted in the texts. This may take significantly more time and effort than is available to a student whose parents help to get Special Education to fix

in a typical classroom; which is what Special Education is for.

Similarly, it is a waste of everyone's time to keep a student capable of doing more advanced math working through week after week of 3 digit, then 4 digit then 5 or more digits of multiplication problems. Or reading books at a 3rd grade level rather than the 6th or 7th grade level they are actually capable, merely because they are 9 years old instead of 12.

Schools need to break the age-grade lockstep in order to teach all kids at their level of challenge. Standardized testing can be an excellent tool to accomplish educational differentiation for students at both ends of the spectrum.

33 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → Anna · 6 months ago

Standardized tests do nothing to accomplish educational differentiation. They have the opposite effect of pulling everyone into the middle of the bell curve. My daughter just had a weeks worth of simulated practice standardized tests so that the school will score well overall. Our school is a pretty high achieving school and many of the students would excell at these tests coming INTO grade let alone near end of grade. Yet they are forced to sit through 4 hours of boredom and silent lunch, for 4 days, to practice a test that they can complete in 30 minutes at most. In a few weeks, they will waste 4 more days taking the real tests. Some schools run 2 simulations. And many lessons are affected by "teachign to the test."

The overwhelming sentiment of all the parents and teachers I have talked to is that these need to be scrapped. They are essentially a waste of time, money and resources, but you need to play the game to get federal and state funding. And this is not isolated. I have a number of educator friends nationwide, in a number of different types of districts, and I have no come across one that supports Common Core or any other type of standardized testing. I have also not come across one parent that supports it once they have been through it. These test place undo pressure on special needs kids and come at the extra expense of the higher performing 25% or more of kids all while wasting weeks of teacher/student time.

19 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anna → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

AtlanticMM - You have a very valid complaint about how your district is implementing standardized testing. But that mis-implementation has NOTHING to do with the tests themselves, or the appropriate use of the student achievement data they can provide.

To appropriately assign a kid to a "learning group", you test them on that subject (with accommodations for disabilities where applicable) and use the results to group students at about the same level in that subject.

9 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Mary Ann → Anna · 6 months ago

Anna,

It is beyond mis-implementation. The material is inappropriate, not age-appropriate and is used to teach/enforce a political/social agenda. Schools do not have the right to discuss divorce with children, to discuss infidelity with them. If you look at the suggested books that are given in NY State as part of the Common Core, just about all of them have a motive. The curriculum/standards do not take into account child development or educational psychology basics. Why? Because the people who designed, developed and initiated CC have no classroom experience - they were just given a mandate from the US Dept. of Ed./The Gates Foundation and they get paid handsomely for what they do. The cost of CC once the government steps back and makes the cost the responsibility of the individual districts only then will the local truly revolt

the individual districts only then will the local truly revert.
Common Core needs to be torn down and rebuilt with parents,
teachers and real educators.

22 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → Mary Ann · 6 months ago

Agree to a point. Common Core can be torn down, but you will never to be able to create a one size fits all policy that is valid for all districts across the nation. All districts have different goals, needs, wants, problems, issues, etc.

We need to remove the influence of the Department of Education and need to remove the tying of school funding to federal programs.

You could get the best educators in the country together and they will not be able to create a "common core" that works.

Education is important and redistribution of money needs to occur, but it should NOT be based upon these insane programs and should not be accountable to the feds. The accountability should be ONLY to the parent of the school district in question.

10 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Joanie → Mary Ann · 6 months ago

Mary Ann, you're confusing 2 different things. Common Core isn't dictating what texts are used. And in fact, I'd bet your district was using texts that incorporate themes such as divorce long before Common Core was even conceived. I'm working on getting rid of forcing on kids developmentally inappropriate, politically driven material in my own district (and I'm on the left, going up against people on the left). Believe me, it is NOT a Common Core issue.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Mary Ann → Joanie · 6 months ago

Joanie, In some states, like NY, because they gave schools no time (or funds) to develop curricula at the district levels, the State as stepped in and provided curricula through web portal called EngageNY. Teacher go there to find content, worksheets, etc. In effect, driving the curriculum. NY is one of the few states that stupidly embraced CC whole-heartedly and I am the mom to two kids with special needs and I see what it has done to them, so, at least in my experience, I am not confusing two different things - they are one in the same.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → Anna · 6 months ago

It's not the district, if the district had control these tests would not be given.

But I think we might be talking about two different things. I certainly agree with grouping children within the same grade into grouping where they are most likely to best learn. This is already done by many districts using whatever means they feel is appropriate. You don't need common core or other state or nationalized standards to do this. YOU need tests that align with the teaching principles and levels you teach at within your district.

I had one kid in the "gifted and talented" program in NC and one here in Texas. The programs are SO different in their methods and goals that no standardized test would work for both. The NC program was more standard learning, just at a faster pace. The Texas program is a much different learning process, more project and interactive based than test based. There is no single standardized test that is going to work for both.

Or say you have a district algebra 1 is very intense and covers way more than many other district algebra 1 classes. Students that test into the less rigorous one may not be able to handle the more rigorous 1. How do you create a standard test to do this separation? You don't. It must be up to the district itself to figure this out!

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



heartprivacy → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

Letting districts set their own standards is how we end up with schools teaching that evolution is "just a theory."

11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → heartprivacy · 6 months ago

There are clear cut laws in place to prevent such things for one. There is a huge difference between what you are talking about and policies that dictate HOW we teach.

I don't have an issue with broad restrictions on separation of church and state, I support them fully. If a school violates such a provision, there are legal actions. No one is claiming a free for all, just the ability to operate flexibly within GENERAL guidelines. What common core and other programs do is akin to saying you must teach evolution in this manner, you must test it in this manner, your funding is tied to the testing and results. And even the issue you mention is way out of proportion. Lots of kids that come out of religious schools and religious colleges do quite well in the world! While I fully agree that creationism should not be part of SCIENCE, what you state is a red herring comparatively.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



heartprivacy → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

I'm no fan of Common Core, don't get me wrong. But I also wince at the idea of "let districts make their own decisions!" when I've seen firsthand how terrible some of those decisions end up being.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → heartprivacy · 6 months ago

That is up to the parents in that district, not you, not me. THEY know what THEY want for THEIR kids.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Gail Finke → heartprivacy · 6 months ago

So let's have the whole country make a terrible decision for all the schools at once?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



cindy → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

I witness what you are seeing. There are "subliminal" goals ensconced in skills students need. Hence the teaching of "social awareness topics" through the use of skills like "deep reading." So on the test, you will be deemed proficient in this skill if you can infer the politically appropriate message in the reading passage. It is manipulation of children.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoshSD → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

"They are essentially a waste of time, money and resources, but you need to play the game to get federal and state funding."

So, what is the alternative? Should there be no objective way to see

So, what is the alternative? Should there be no objective way to see how well a school is doing with the state and feds money? Just keep giving them the money and leave them alone?

You have three options.

- 1) Trust parents to pick the right school for their child.
- 2) Trust tests to tell us which schools are doing a good job.
- 3) Trust administrators to do a good job and pray they admit it when they are failing.

1=Bad

2=Worse

3=Crazy recipe for disaster

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Schools should answer to the parents, not to the state and feds. If you are going to redistribute money, and we should, let those districts do as they please - those districts answer to the parents, not the feds, not the state. So add #4, Trust PARENTS to grade their schools!

Fraud or abuse of funds can be handled by legal means, and should be punished severely, not with simply wrist slaps.

There is enough public information out there to help folks get an idea about a school district - graduation rates, dropout rates, SAT scores, ACT scores, kids going to 4-year colleges, money spent per pupil, programs available to the needy, etc.

Perhaps better than standardized tests might be random audits where all this and more are looked at.

I will agree, no easy answer!

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Gail Finke → JoshSD · 6 months ago

Let's look, shall we? How did schools manage before all that testing? Hmmmm.... They varied but, overall, BETTER. And how do homeschoolers do now? (BTW, I am not one.) They vary just like schools do but... on the whole... BETTER. The problem is the breakdown of the family. Schools can't fix that.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



SK → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

Silent lunch! That sounds inhumane. (On top of everything else you wrote.)

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → SK · 6 months ago

I coached a 12-year old girls VB team that my daughter was on.

The Tuesday night practice after two days of this crap was quite an eye opener. After about 5 minutes of trying to get them to focus, I simply gave up and we had totally unstructured athletic fun as they were SOOO pent up!

Yeah, the silent lunch is the kicker and is there because 1) they don't want kids to share their answers and 2) it might disturb those not at lunch taking the test. Like total silence is a real world situation!

They are taught a single method to go through each problem about 4 times, a very strict, rote method. Even the "creative" writing has a formula to use to get the best grade. No matter the content or the idea or the real creativeness, you follow the format you get a "4" (highest grade).

All in all, these tests are one of the most troubling aspects in education today!

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erik Vanderhoff → Anna · 6 months ago

An autistic student without serious language impairment can be taught to recognize by means of repeated exposure to "scripts" which reveal the thoughts of a character to recognize how dialog and actions further the plot or reveal the character's emotional state.

No, what that student is doing is learning "cues" to give the rote answers. She's basically being taught to proceed along a flowchart; some are being taught very complex flowcharts indeed, but in the end it's still a system with four defined sides. It's how a classmate becomes a "friend" -- because I spend time with him -- and "likes football" -- because his mom put him in a 49ers jersey -- without actually forming any kind of real connection or knowing what friendship actually is. And heaven help that kid when she's asked a question that doesn't fit the script. All this does is teach masking techniques, not real compensation.

13 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



aproposwhen → Erik Vanderhoff · 6 months ago

I have two relatives with autism and I work in education. While I agree essentially with what you're saying, sometimes providing the cues that can help them get past the social barriers is the place to start. That's at the core of their disability, many cannot and never will be able to form typical social connections. Those who eventually are able to have had significant help to learn coping skills along the way, or their disability is not very severe. That should not be a barrier on a math test question but inferring thoughts and actions of a character in a language arts question? Now that student is scoring significantly lower on a standardized test that is not being appropriately differentiated by a teacher certified in teaching special needs students. Sadly, the Common Core is lacking in differentiation, that's really the whole point of this experiment.

9 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erik Vanderhoff → aproposwhen · 6 months ago

If you want your intervention to be coping skills -- and I agree that this is often the most realistic approach -- then that's fine; just be honest and straightforward. I don't mean to put, say, social thinking curriculum in the same category as snake oil interventions like chelation or hyperbaric chambers or, to a lesser extent, discrete trial, but it's important to note that methods such as social thinking or those Anna notes are often marketed as broad interventions when they are actually just good interventions for some kids with autism.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Joanie → aproposwhen · 6 months ago

Great points, Aproposwhen. Alas, as literacy standards affect non-Language Arts classes more and more, you get questions in math and science that require understanding of personal interactions that will confuse literal thinkers with social communications deficits.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Michelle Sarabia → Erik Vanderhoff · 3 months ago

No, an autistic learning scripting isn't a socially mindless parrot. I'm autistic, and am absolutely horrified by your perception of what it means to learn scripting. Heaven help ANYBODY, autistic or not, when they find themselves in a confusing social situation that goes beyond their scripts... you use scripts you just don't consciously realize it, even if you aren't autistic. You make social mistakes and errors in judgement over

whether someone is a friend or not. That autistics make many more mistakes than average, and have differing goals, priorities, and interests than the norm, means that masking (which is different than scripting, by the way, and has to do with some stim replacements and body language) and scripting must be done consciously and takes a lot longer to learn.... all done to accommodate non-autistics, NOT to help the autistic themselves with anything other than the comfort of those around them. Start looking in the mirror and watching your own masking, scripting, and evaluating your own mistakes in the social realm, before you start dismissing the efforts and errors of the autistics you happen to have spent some time observing.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erik Vanderhoff → Michelle Sarabia · 3 months ago

This is an excellent point.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Sabrina Alfin → Anna · 6 months ago

Yes, but then you get into the age-old tracking debate. I'm all for separating students out into ability levels--it's an efficient way to teach. But it seems to be an anaethema to those in the world of K-8 education for reasons still not clear to me. Once a kid gets to high school, all those concerns over tracking go right out the window with tracks for honors and AP students and those who will be lucky to pass the high school exit exam.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM → Sabrina Alfin · 6 months ago

Even 40+ years ago in 1st grade we had tracking, starting with breaking out those who were better or worse in math and reading. Then came the 80s and the stigma of such tracking and how it hurts the esteem of kids in the lower achieving groups.

In our district here in Texas, grades k-4 are tracked pretty much in classroom, with gifted-talented kids having a day a week off in a special classroom. Starting in 5 grade, classrooms are changed and tracking is done in math, science, reading. Then from middle to high school you have tons of options from basic to pre-AP to AP classes. So within a school, you basically run 4-5 different schools which are very similarly academically. It's a no brainer that this allows each type of class to set the proper challenging pace. And you still get mixing of these internal schools in classes that have only a single option: art, athletics, health, choir, band, etc. Any cultural or social diversity you lose in the academic tracking you are exposed to in these common classes.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Sabrina Alfin → AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

I never thought I'd hear myself saying this: California should be more like Texas. (Minus the creationism thing, of course.) :-)

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Joanie → Anna · 6 months ago

What you're describing with a child with autism is direct instruction. The problem is, how do you get the school to offer it? When reform math has been adopted district wide, and online learning through a more traditional, direct-instruction approach such as ALECS is considered to violate LRE (and yes, a special ed director claimed that in my district!), what do you do? There is no differentiation if certain curricula and delivery approaches are forced on parents and students. It seems CC may exacerbate that problem--or, because the standards themselves are poorly written and conceptualized, it will be interpreted in ways that exacerbate the problem.

You're absolutely right that the focus should be on mastery, but that is not how schools work. THAT is the endless migraine we parents of special ed students

are dealing with!

Then, too, you have the issue of socialization. For me, being gifted wasn't a problem--I was put a year ahead in school and placed in gifted classes in elementary school, but was lucky enough to mature at the rate of my peers. For other kids in the same exact situation, it was a huge social problem that affected them for years. It is HARD to be in a class with kids who look like adults when you are developmentally a year behind. The key is flexibility within the system.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



Anna → Joanie · 6 months ago

Joanie - I absolutely understand the problem, because I've lived them first as a gifted child forced to stay with my age-mates in schools where there were no "gifted" programs, being harassed by them and often by the teachers for being a show-off know-it-all, and then as the parent of 3 gifted kids with special needs (even beyond the "special need" of having 160+ IQs). None of them actually have ASD according to their doctors and the ADOS, but our whole family has some autistic traits.

I found that the on-line programs were sanity-savers for my kids, and in several cases paid for them out of pocket in order to keep them intellectually challenged. My husband and I seek out social groups where a common interest (in strategy or role-playing games, in science fiction, in the Maker movement) trumps ageism and to some degree, social skill, and we facilitate our kids' participation in those communities.

Many, many people find they need to home-school or partially homeschool their kids who are developing with significant asynchrony. Most schools, and especially traditional public schools, are run on a "batch factory" model for the convenience of the adults who work in them. That was true before Common Core was even thought of, and it will still be true when we've all moved on to the next big thing. There's nothing about the Common Core standards that demand this lockstep progression, but almost all educators will stick with the model of delivering that instruction to groups of students matched by age rather than academic achievement.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



EBennetDarcy · 6 months ago

Common Core is a disaster in every way, not just for special needs students, although its lack of flexibility to adapt to a range of needs is one of CC's most egregious flaws.

12 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



AtlanticMM → EBennetDarcy · 6 months ago

Yep, as bad as it is for special needs, it is just as bad for academically advanced. And even for those in the wheelhouse, the average to above average student, it's restricted way of teaching is only going to connect to certain students. Teachers need the flexibility to teach multiples ways to solve a single problem.

I cannot count the number of times I try to help my kiddo with math homework and I show her a way to do it that is easier and clicks more with her than the method being taught. Yet they are not allowed to solve the problems that way! Can you imagine - they are not allowed to get the right answer unless they use ONLY the method being mandated!!

I still recall the time we were doing subtracting and when I showed her borrowing she looked blankly at me as she showed me the (IMHO) harder to understand regrouping concept. Yet they only teach the one way. They only accept the one way. The real world is all about being able to solve the same problem in any number of different ways, with any number of fairly equivalent correct answers. Yet we pound in rote-ness. IF you have ever deal with those that have learned in an extremely rote culture you will find that they are great

when problems are clearly defined and the path is unencumbered, yet are lost when there are obstacle or lack of definition or out of box thinking is required. Yet they kick ass on tests and are validictorians and such! I see it every day in my profession!

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AtlanticMM · 6 months ago

Not just special needs, even mainstream kids of similar intellect learn different ways. The problem with Common Core, No Child, Race to the Top, is that they try to force one-size-fits-all policies on all kids, all districts, all states. That simply will not work, and not work.

We need to remove these all encompassing policies and the distribution of funds tied to them and return power to each and every school district. Parents have no control at the federal or state level, but they have as much direct control as they can get in their own local school districts. Let the board members they vote in set the policies that are best suited for the populace in those districts.

Distributed money based on need formulas, but remove all ties to implementing these idiotic policies.

11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Priscilla Sanstead · 6 months ago

Here is a recent example from Florida. Who is Ethan Rediske?

Ethan was a severely disabled child, who recently passed away. Even as he was in hospice care, his teacher was being pressured to administer Florida's mandatory high stakes tests.

Show your support for Ethan and for all children of Florida by changing your profile picture with Ethan's picture this Friday. Raise awareness about how unfair these testing mandates are. Show Florida legislators that there will be support behind legislative actions that give parents the unquestionable right to opt their children out of high stakes testing.

In the words of Ethan's mom, Andrea Rediske:

"(WE) call on the Florida legislature... to pass the Ethan Rediske Act, which would exempt disabled children from the rigors of high-stakes standardized testing, and (we) implore the legislature to go further and to enact legislation that allows any student, who experiences pain and suffering as a result of high-stakes standardized testing, to opt out of these tests.

Thank you."

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



heartprivacy → Priscilla Sanstead · 6 months ago

That sounds like a terrible idea, honestly, that if a student experiences "suffering" as a result of tests, they should be exempt.

What student DOESN'T experience suffering as a result of tests?

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Load more comments

ALSO ON THE ATLANTIC

Violence Among the Amish 143 comments

The Quiet Crisis Among Queer Women
332 comments

Why Do Americans Love to Blame Teachers? 336 comments

The Food Gap Is Widening 226 comments

SPONSORED STORIES

CNN Money: How Young Millionaires Invest CNN

18 Worst Dogs For Households With Children Dog Show

Older Homes Are Better Than Newer Ones Porch.com

Packing the Essentials: 4 Steps to an Organized Carry-On Bag Women & Co

WHAT'S THIS?

ATLANTIC MEDIA

CITYLAB

How the Global Population Boom Really Began

Where Are All the Baby Boomers Going to Live?

How Much Will Your College Roommate Influence Your Life?

More from CityLab

THE WIRE

Even Supreme Court Justices Cite 'Internet Facts' (Just Like the Rest of Us)

Joan Rivers Still On Life Support

Two Former Senators Are Helping a Russian Bank Fight U.S. Sanctions

More from The Wire

QUARTZ

How an allegedly fraudulent Chinese company may have bilked investors out of \$650 million

Wall Street is running out of superlatives for Elon Musk and Tesla

A college degree still pays for itself—and in a lot less time than it used to

More from Quartz

NationalJournal

Why Your Physician Is Most Likely to Be White or Asian

Netflix Supports Government-Run Internet

Why Congress Won't Help Jennifer Lawrence

More from National Journal

Defense One

Democrats Break Ranks to Urge Military Assistance to Ukraine, Talks With Putin

Islamic State Militant Beheads U.S. Journalist Steven Sotloff in Video, Group Says

Is There a Plan to Attack in Syria or Not?

More from Defense One

FOLLOW THE ATLANTIC

- App store
- Google Play
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Google Plus
- Tumblr
- RSS

E-NEWSLETTERS

- Today's Top Stories
- This Week
- This Month
- New at In Focus
- CityLab
- 5 Best Columns
- Today's News

INFORMATION

- FAQ
- Subscribe Help
- Masthead
- Store
- Emporium
- Jobs
- Privacy
- Site Map
- Terms and Conditions
- Advertise
- Advertising Guidelines
- Press
- Contact Us
- Special Reports
- Atlantic Scene
- Books
- Events
- Atlantic Media

SUBSCRIBE



Get 10 issues a year and save 65% off the cover price

Fraud alert regarding *The Atlantic*

FIRST NAME	
LAST NAME	
ADDRESS 1	
ADDRESS 2	
CITY	
STATE	ZIP
EMAIL	
Next ▶	