

The common core standards and national tests: We are backing the wrong horse.

S Krashen

Rationale for Common Core standards AND TESTS: Our schools are “broken”

Evidence = Performance on international test scores. We are "taking a shellacking."

Our scores – not spectacular but not horrible, tied for 10th/60 on PISA 2009 reading (15 yr olds)

Middle class children attending well-funded schools score at top of the world, control for poverty, US near top of world (Carnoy and Rothstein, 2013)

PISA results, 2009: USA

% free/red lunch	Score
less than 10%	551
10-24.9%	527
25-49.9%	502
50-74.6%	471
75% or more	446

Top scores world-wide: Shanghai 566, Hong Kong 533, Singapore 526; Finland, Korea: 539, Finland: 536. USA mean = 502

Percent US children in poverty: over 23%. Second highest of 34 industrialized countries. Finland = 4%. The problem is poverty. NOT: teaching, schools of ed, unions, parents, lack of national standards/tests

POVERTY: Improve schools to cure poverty, or cure poverty to improve schools? "We are likely to find that the problems of housing and education, instead of preceding the elimination of poverty, will themselves be affected if poverty is first abolished." (Martin Luther King, 1967, Final Words of Advice)

Dr. King was right:

1. No correlations between test scores and economic well-being (Zhao, 2009)
2. Devastating effect of aspects of poverty on school achievement (Berliner, 2009)
 - a. Food deprivation/nutrition
 - b. Environmental toxins (eg the case of lead)
 - c. Lack of health care (eg school nurses in high and low poverty schools)
 - d. Lack of access to books: home, school, community

The Beverly Hills/Watts study: (Smith, Constantino & Krashen)

(1) Available books in the home: BH = 200; Watts = .4

(2) Classroom libraries: BH = 400; Watts = 5

The Philadelphia study (Neuman & Celano): middle-class children "deluged" with books, high poverty have difficulty getting any access

SOLUTION

1. Full employment at a living wage for honest work
2. Short term: protect children from the effects of poverty
 - a. No child left unfed (S. Ohanian)
 - b. Improved health care at school (eg school nurses)
 - c. Provide access to books: support libraries

The importance of libraries

1. Children get their books from libraries
2. Better libraries > better reading (Keith Curry Lance, Jeff McQuillan)
3. **Libraries/access to books can offset the impact of poverty**

Predictors of achievement on the PIRLS reading: Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan (2012)

predictor	beta	P
SES	.42	0.003
SSR	.19	0.09
Library	.34	.005
Instruction	-.19	0.07
r ² = .63		

Other evidence: S. Krashen, Protecting students against the effects of poverty: Libraries (New England Reading Association Journal) <http://sdkrashen.com/>
Closing the gap between African –American and white children: Fryer & Levitt (2004): SES accounts for 2/3 of gap, books in home accounts for the rest.

Meanwhile library funding is being cut:

American Library Association, 2010. The State of America's Libraries. American Libraries
Kelley, M. 2010, Budget survey: Bottoming out? Library Journal, 2010.
School library cuts greater in high poverty areas, Literacy Through School Libraries grant eliminated

WHERE WILL WE GET THE MONEY? REDUCE TESTING (NUT = no unnecessary testing)

The current plans to increase testing (Blueprint): far beyond NCLB: all subjects, pre and post for “value-added”? Formative/interim testing (hijacking of term "formative"), Pre-K screening.
Evidence? NONE

More standardized high stakes tests do not mean better performance: Nichols, Glass & Berliner, 2006

Adding SATs to grades does not improve prediction of college success: (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Geiser & Santelices, 2007).

“Heavy Lifting”: What will it cost? All tests will be online: NY City, Florida budget of ½ billion: Buried deep: NY Times, statement by "city officials" - huge expenditures for technology primarily to make it possible for students to take computerized national standardized tests.

Students as experimental subjects: If it fails: students/teachers suffer, but corporations win. And how long until it is obsolete?

We can protect children from much of the impact of poverty for a fraction of the cost of new tests.

A modest proposal: Keep (an improved) NAEP, drop the rest.