

## Examining the myths

Sometimes the proponents of increased standardized testing, data collection, and ranking imply that teachers are afraid of assessment, want to control the system, and actually create the test anxiety in students.

In fact, teachers rely on assessment—authentic assessment—to support student learning. We have always understood the need to work in partnership with parents, trustees, administration, the ministry, and others to do the very best for our students. We know that when teachers' voices are left out of the education dialogue, critical information is missing and poor decisions are more likely. Daily, in myriad ways, we bring out the best in our students. We understand that creating anxiety is counter-productive and we do our very best to encourage our students and help them engage in learning.

*No longer just a tool for program review or curriculum evaluation, test scores are increasingly used to create competition in education by publicly ranking schools according to test results. Testing is also a multi-million dollar industry with spin-offs in all directions.*

Marita Moll, education researcher, author,  
*Passing the Test: The False Promises of Standardized Testing*

## Advocating for our students

- ✓ Take time to talk to parents and others about teaching, learning, and the importance of assessment that helps students succeed.
- ✓ Let parents know what's taking valuable time away from teaching and learning.
- ✓ When you're facing relentless demands for data, increased paperwork, and yet another round of standardized tests, ask yourself:
  - Will this give me information I don't have yet?
  - Will I be able to use the results of this assessment to help students learn?
  - Who benefits the most from students doing this assessment?
  - Who can I talk to about my professional concerns?
- ✓ Make your views known. Write to your community newspaper, talk to your PAC, and lobby your MLA about supporting teaching and learning.
- ✓ Use your professional judgment, talk with your colleagues, and work together to put student learning first.

*School principals around the world believe that many current student testing policies and related accountability practices contain flaws that detract from what should be our primary goal of improving learning. Instead, many jurisdictions appear to be more concerned with providing comparative statistics on a narrow range of student abilities resulting in an incomplete and misleading picture presented to the general public.*

Canadian Association of Principals,  
"Valid Uses of Student Testing as part of Authentic, Comprehensive Student Assessment"

A Statement of Concern  
from Canada's School Principals



# Testing? You bet.

**Teachers know how to assess, when to assess, and what kinds of assessment to use to support student learning.**

*Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.*

Albert Einstein



**British Columbia Teachers' Federation**  
[www.bctf.ca](http://www.bctf.ca)

## Valuing and supporting students

Teachers are very proud of the first-class public education system in BC. We welcome all students in public schools. We believe that every student needs support and encouragement. As professionals, we know that learning is a complex process and that students learn in different ways and at different rates. We understand that children and youth need time to create, experience, learn, and grow.



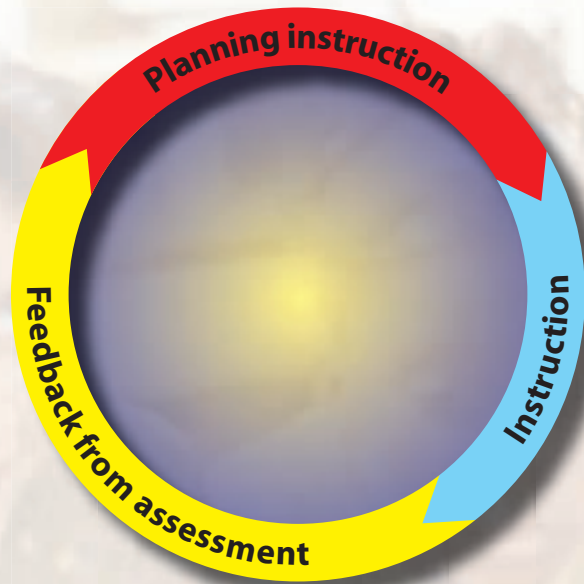
*When they assess for learning, teachers use the classroom assessment process and the continuous flow of information about student achievement that it provides in order to advance, not merely check on, student learning.*

Canadian Association of Principals,  
“Valid Uses of Student Testing as part of Authentic,  
Comprehensive Student Assessment”

A Statement of Concern  
from Canada’s School Principals

## Using assessment for learning

BC teachers are highly qualified, caring professionals. We work with students in classrooms every day and we put our students’ needs first. We know that testing is an important part of the learning cycle. We believe that assessment must support learning.



We are knowledgeable and trained to know the purpose and appropriate uses of tests. Because no single test or assessment strategy is completely reliable, teachers use a wide variety of assessment tools and strategies such as projects, presentations, goal setting, quizzes, classroom tests, writing samples, and much more.

## Trusting our professional judgment

We continually examine our practice, collaborate with colleagues, and stay current in our knowledge of the very best ways to help students learn. We have seen many trends come and go in teaching and we strive to make professional choices based on what will best meet our students’ needs. We know that standardized tests are often overused, misused, and not useful for student learning. We believe the proliferation of testing moves education backwards while doing nothing to help our students learn.



*Educational reform in Canada should not just be about narrowing numerical gaps in easily measurable outcomes, but about striving to benefit and enrich the learning of all students and all aspects of every student in an inspired and inclusive social and educational vision of what the country still stands for today and must aspire to become tomorrow.*

Andy Hargreaves, Thomas More Brennan  
Chair in Education, Boston College,  
*The Long and Short of Educational Change*

## Supporting teaching and learning

*Establishing needs is easy—finding the resources to meet those needs is the hard part and the very thing that the public system struggles with daily due to funding priorities that do not reflect community needs.*

Eden Haythornthwaite,  
school trustee, Cowichan Valley  
Board of Education

It’s easy for politicians and bureaucrats to focus on test results and data collection in order to deflect from the resources they should be providing to schools. But teachers understand the importance of quality teaching and learning conditions. As professionals, we are accountable to our students and for speaking out on their behalf.

*If testing was deployed to find schools or children in need, then we would be seeing the progressive increase in funding for those schools.*

Eden Haythornthwaite,  
school trustee, Cowichan Valley  
Board of Education

We expect the government and boards of education to be accountable, too. Teachers must be given the teaching and learning conditions, resources, and time to help all students succeed. When teaching and learning is undermined, everyone loses. The most recent StatsCan report (1998-2005) revealed that, while other provinces reduced the pupil teacher ratio, it was actually increased in BC. We believe that our province can afford to fund and maintain the quality public education system our students need.

## Sharing our knowledge

Polling shows that classroom teachers are the most trusted and credible spokespersons on public education issues. Sometimes, in our busy teaching lives, it’s hard for us to remember this. We deal with many expectations and meet many different demands. We’re also very conscientious and take any criticism to heart. But the public opinion research is clear. Parents and the public want to hear from us and value what we have to say.



*In my experience, the people who work most closely with kids are the most likely to understand how harmful standardized testing is... Those for whom classroom visits are occasional photo opportunities are most likely to be big fans of testing and to offer self-congratulatory sound bites about the need for “tougher standards” and “accountability.” The more that parents and other members of the community learn about these tests, the more critical of them—if not appalled by them—they tend to become.*

Dr. Alfie Kohn