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THE ACCUMULATION OF DISADVANTAGE:
The Role of Educational Testing in the School Career of Minority Children

This paper discusses the ways standardized testing puts children of color and children living in poverty at a disadvantage. This disadvantage begins early in the school career of a child and repeats itself again and again. Education, when driven by standardized testing, is not the great equalizer it is so often portrayed to be in the mythical world where merit counts most.

Testing starts early and it occurs often in the life of an average student, even more often if a student is at either end of the achievement spectrum, i.e. gifted or has learning disabilities. In a recent analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten cohort (ECLS-K), Lee & Burkam (2002) conclude: "There are substantial differences by race and ethnicity in children's test scores as they begin kindergarten. Before even entering kindergarten, the average cognitive score of children in the highest SES group are 60% above the scores of the lowest SES group. Moreover, average math achievement is 21% lower for blacks than for whites, and 19% lower for Hispanics." Setting aside the unjustified confidence in the meaningfulness of standardized test scores for young children (Association for Childhood Education International, 1991), this report illustrates just the beginning of a lifetime of characterizations and decisions that will be made and indeed institutionalized for children of color and those living in poverty.

Beginning in Kindergarten, test results are used to sort, track, and monitor the abilities, achievements, and potentials of students. Assessments, based in part on standardized test results, are essential for monitoring the progress of children, for making instructional and curricular decisions, and for evaluating programs and policies. The danger is that standardized test results will be weighed more heavily than they ought to be, that decisions once made cannot or will not be reversed, and that other compelling information may be ignored.

The uses of standardized testing are more far ranging than most people realize. While there is considerable variation from one district to the next, children will be administered at least one but typically many more standardized tests within a single year. The following table illustrates the testing experience of a child from Kindergarten through high school in an upstate New York school district.

Grade	Test
Kindergarten	Boehm Test of Basic Concepts
1 st	Gates MacGinitie Reading Test*
2 nd	Gates MacGinitie Reading Test* Stanford Diagnostic Math Test* Terra Nova (reading & math)
3 rd	Gates-MacGinitie Reading Testing* Stanford Diagnostic Math Test* Terra Nova (reading & math) School & College Ability Test (SCAT)** Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
4 th	Gates MacGinitie Reading Test* Stanford Diagnostic Math Test* School & College Ability Test (SCAT)** NYS English Language Arts Test NYS Math Test NYS Science Test
5 th	Gates MacGinitie Reading Test* Stanford Diagnostic Math Test* Terra Nova (reading & math) School & College Ability Test (SCAT)** NYS Social Studies Test
6 th	Terra Nova (reading & math) School & College Ability Test (SCAT)**
7 th	Terra Nova (reading & math) Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
8 th	NYS English Language Arts Test NYS Math Test NYS Science Test NYS Social Studies Test NYS Foreign Language Test NYS Technology Test
9 th	Regents Exams: English Language Arts Mathematics Global History & Geography US History & Government Science Language other than English PSAT SAT
10 th	
11 th	
12 th	

* for remedial students only

** Johns Hopkins Talent Search test for gifted program

Figure 1. An Illustration of the Testing in the Life of a Student

The Case of High Stakes Tests

What are high stakes tests? They are tests that have serious consequences attached to the results—these consequences may be for students, teachers, principals, schools, and even states. For students, these consequences include whether they will graduate from high school, whether they will be promoted to the next grade or retained, whether they will spend their summer in school, or whether they will be required to participate in tutoring that extends their time in school substantially. Although high stakes tests can confer rewards as well as sanctions, and indeed a number of states provide financial rewards for high or improved test scores, more often there are punishments. These punishments can be direct (such as taking over or closing school, replacing administrators or teachers, or withdrawing accreditation) or indirect (such as publishing test scores in the local newspaper, shaming, or job reassignment).

Although high stakes testing has become a national phenomenon, there are some clear patterns illustrating who is most likely to be subjected to these tests. High stakes testing is disproportionately found in states with higher percentages of people of color and living in poverty. A recent analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) shows that 35% of African American and 27% of Hispanic 8th graders will take a high stakes test, compared to 16% of whites (Reardon & Galindo, 2002). Looked at along class lines, 25% of low SES 8th graders will take a high stakes test compared to 14% of high SES 8th graders.

The Quality Counts (2001) report indicates that of the 18 states that require passing a standardized test to graduate, 11 are in the south, i.e., states with substantial minority populations. As more states adopt high school graduation tests this relationship will weaken some—26 states in all plan to have such a test—14 of those are in the south or southwest regions of the country. States that currently use high school graduation exams to grant or withhold diplomas are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. States that are developing high school exit exams are Alaska, Arizona, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

And, not only are students of color more likely to take high stakes tests, but they also score lower than white students. From the websites of a sample of any state departments of education (for illustrative purposes Massachusetts, New York, and Kentucky are described here) one can demonstrate this conclusion. Last year in Boston, 43% of white students failed the tenth grade math test, 85% of Hispanic students failed. In Schenectady NY 62% of children of color failed the 4th grade ELA, 41% of white students failed. In neighboring Albany school district, 68% of children of color failed this test, compared to 33% of whites. In Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, scores on reading tests demonstrate the same relationship: 63% of white 4th graders were proficient, compared to 34% of African American children; 54% of white 7th grade students were proficient, compared to 27% of African Americans; and in 11th grade 37% of whites were proficient compared to 13% of African American students.

The remainder of this discussion will focus on three outcomes of high stakes testing, and the ways in which minority children are particularly disadvantaged.

- the disproportionate impact of state testing on drop out rates for minorities
- the bizarre effect of monetary rewards for students, and
- the diminishment in the quality of education as a consequence of testing, for all but especially for minority students when differential performance on tests is translated into the "achievement gap"

The Impact of Testing on Drop Out Rates for Minorities

Both graduation tests and tests given earlier in a student's career are having substantial impact on the numbers of students who are dropping out of school. The increased drop out rates are based on two factors, the graduation tests themselves and the impact of increased rates of retention in grade, especially in 8th and 9th grades.

Graduation Tests. The numbers of states requiring graduation tests is on the rise and by 2008 more than half of the states plan to have such a test in place. (See Figure 2.) This represents a dramatic increase in a less than 30 year period. In 1983 when *A Nation at Risk*, the flash point for the standards based and test driven educational reform movement, was published, three states had minimum competency testing in place (Florida, North Carolina, and Nevada) that amounted to a graduation or exit test. *A Nation at Risk* called for rigorous tests to assess exiting high school students. Dorn (2003) points out that concerns about a decrease in high school graduation rates is particularly pointed given that most teenagers graduate. The proportion of all students who obtain a high school diploma has steadily increased in the last fifty years with more dramatic increases for minorities. It is this context that suggests backsliding in national educational aspirations with the advent of high stakes graduation tests.

Amrein & Berliner (2001) report actual or estimated percentages of students who take and fail high school graduation tests in eighteen high stakes testing states. They find a considerable variability across states: a low of 0.5% in Virginia where the basic skills graduation test is administered in 6th grade to a high of 10% in New York and 12% in Georgia. In addition to students who take the test and fail to graduate, considerable numbers of students either drop out or take the GED. An examination of data from the National Center for Education Statistics illustrates that nationwide since 1985 there has been a more than 20% increase in the number of GED test takers, mostly for people 19 years of age or younger. So, while failing the graduation tests may keep a substantial number of students from receiving a high school diploma, these tests reverberate down in schools and influence decisions made by schools about students and decisions made by students about schooling.

Retention in Grade. There are two grade levels at which retention is most common: 1st grade when under-age boys are retained to permit them time to 'mature', and again in 8th and 9th grade when students are on the cusp of entering high school. Students of color are retained at high rates and there is an unhealthy interaction between grade retention and the presence of high stakes testing. Analyses of the NELS data indicate the mere presence of a high stakes test is a strong predictor of higher drop out rates (Reardon & Galindo, 2002).

Haney (2000) found, "Only 50% of minority students in Texas have been progressing from grade 9 to high school graduation since the initiation of the TAAS testing program. Since about 1982, the rates at which Black and Hispanic students are required to repeat grade 9 have climbed steadily, such that by the late 1990s, nearly 30% of Black and Hispanic students were "failing" grade 9. Cumulative rates of grade retention in Texas are almost twice as high for Black and Hispanic students as for White students." One conclusion from this study is that retaining students in 9th grade boosts the 10th grade TAAS scores (because the potential low scorers are excluded) *and in effect* keeps many of these students from every taking the test as the likelihood they will drop out of school increases dramatically.

In Massachusetts, with the implementation of a 10th grade high stakes test the overall retention rates for 9th graders jumped from 6.3 percent in 1995 to 8.4 percent in 2001. In 2001 twelve districts held back 20% of 9th graders. The districts with the highest 9th grade retention rates, between 27 and 38%, enroll a majority of nonwhite students.

In parallel to these changes in retention rates, we see increases in the number of students dropping out of school. Being retained in grade, especially in middle and high school, at least triples a student's likelihood of dropping out of school.

If students persist and take a high school graduation test, those who do poorly on the test are more likely to drop out of school *and* this poor test performance disproportionately affects students with high grades. In other words, students who have by other indicators done reasonably well in school are disproportionately influenced by poor test scores to drop out of school. It appears that high stakes testing contributes substantially to grade retention in middle and high school and to the failure of students to graduate from high school.

The Bizarre Effect of Monetary Rewards for Students

Six states give scholarships to students for high performance on state mandated tests—California, Delaware, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, and Ohio. (See Quality Counts, 2001.) These scholarships provide neither incentives nor opportunities for minority students to go to college, in spite of the rhetoric to that effect. Scholarship money goes to students who would have attended college anyway—they maintain the status quo with regard to access to a college education.

Michigan's Merit Scholarship Program is a good example of this scenario. It is worth noting that the Treasury Department administers the testing program in Michigan. Using money from a settlement with cigarette companies, Michigan awards scholarships based on performance on the Michigan Education Accountability Program, or MEAP. In Michigan, one in three white, one in five Native American, one in five Hispanic, and one in fourteen African American test takers receive scholarships. In the Detroit area, 80% of students in affluent suburban districts, which are white, compared to 6% of students in the Detroit city schools received scholarships. Not only does the Michigan scholarship program reward those already college bound, but does so by diverting money that should have gone to Michigan's poor and indigent who are suffering from tobacco related diseases. Michigan state is currently being sued by the ACLU, MALDEF and the NAACP for these and other corrupting effects of high stakes testing in that state.

The Diminishing Quality of Education for All Children, and Especially for Minority Students as Manifest in the "Achievement Gap" Rhetoric

There is a great deal of research to be done to fully understand the impact of high stakes testing on the quality of education and schooling, but the short term conclusion researchers are drawing is that high stakes testing not only does not improve education, but indeed diminishes its quality. A local newspaper carried a critique of state testing from a middle school student:

The statewide test bombards the schools with pressure... In the second week of school we get things from the teacher like, "This was on the test last year so listen up"... The pressure restricts teachers from doing their job... They can't help struggling students fully understand the material because when the student starts to finally kind of get it, it's time to move on so they can get the entire curriculum taught. ... The test pressure just about kills some kids. I have never heard a student say, "All this pressure from the test gets me fired up!" more often. I see kids cracking. They start freaking out... the test is taking away the real meaning of school. Instead of learning new things and getting tools for life, the mission of the schools is becoming to do well on the test. (Louisville Courier Journal, February 10, 2003)

This 7th grader's words capture much of what researchers are finding out about the impact of high stakes testing or what is more generally called outcome based bureaucratic accountability. As reflected in this student's comments, high stakes testing is contributing to the

- deprofessionalization of teachers
- narrowing of the curriculum
- adoption of curriculum driven by tests that under-represent the purposes of schooling
- practice of only teaching what is tested
- elimination of project based student work, field trips, recess
- creation of unproductive stress

(See, for example, Amrein & Berliner (2002); Clarke, Shore, Rhoades, Abrams, Miao & Li (2003); Hillocks (2002); Madaus (1998); Mathison, Ross & Vinson (2001); MacNeil (2000); Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos & Miao (2003); and Vinson, Gibson & Ross (2001) for more detailed discussions of the impact of high stakes testing on teaching, teachers, and learning.)

High stakes testing has these negative effects on many children, but it is especially so for children of color, because they are disproportionately exposed to and punished by the effects of high stakes tests. In addition, because the use and impact of tests is ubiquitous we are diverted from thinking about causes, from thinking about the basic technical shortcomings of the tests as well as the scoring, standard setting and interpretation, and from the interests served by these test-based accountability schemes. An obvious manifestation of this diversion is the rhetoric of the "achievement gap."

Is there really an achievement gap? The rhetoric of the achievement gap adopts a deficit model of those scoring lower on tests, often seeking explanations based on differences in natural abilities, a harkening back to early eugenics of standardized testing—or at least to the identification of cultural deficiencies among those doing less well on the tests. This rhetoric leads to a search for solutions in those deficient children and families, solutions that by and large advocate doing more of the same that apparently isn't working now, e.g., tutoring, grade retention, extended school days/years and the adoption of pedagogies that deskill both teachers and students, e.g., the adoption of direct instruction techniques and phonics only curriculum. These strategies might lead to short term gains in test scores, but do not result in meaningful learning.

The rhetoric of the achievement gap looks for solutions that alter children and families of color and those living poverty, but not for solutions that alter teachers competencies, curriculum, pedagogy, school organization or school finance. Alternatives to the search for how to remedy poor and minority children and families might be:

- fundamental restructuring of schools (e.g. alternatives to authoritarian and top down management of schools)
- improvement of school climate (e.g., enough paper, books kids can take home and even keep, toilet paper in the bathrooms, air conditioning, adequate space, classrooms instead of trailers, quiet places for one-on-one interactions with students, 'Books, supplies, and lower class size!')
- curricular alternatives (e.g., afro-centric or latino-centric curriculum)
- efforts to decrease class size or create small schools
- reform of school financing (e.g. elimination of local property taxation as a major component of school financing)
- the racial profiling inherent in discipline policies and practices
- the Courts' role in re-segregating schools, creating what the Harvard Civil Rights Project calls apartheid schools,
- much greater caution about using hastily developed, un-validated tests that are used by policy makers in ways that violate professional standards and are frequently inaccurately scored

The "achievement gap" is more accurately a *test score gap*. It's also an *opportunity gap*. And, a visit to an affluent white suburban school and one to an urban primarily minority school will illustrate there is

a *resources gap*, and that same visit will also reveal an *income gap*. Focusing on the test score gap without attention to these other gaps will do little to alleviate the inherent racism in educational opportunity and achievement.

College Entrance Tests

In the face of great odds, children of color and living in poverty do complete high school and aspire to attend post-secondary education where they encounter another potential set back in the form of college entrance tests. Based on a lack of validity and the differential performance of minority and poor children (see Figures 5 and 6) there has been increasing criticism and rejection of both SAT and ACT scores for college admissions (Sacks, 1999). Still, many colleges expect students to take these admissions tests and Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the disadvantage for minority students and the impact of income on test scores. With regard to the impact of family income on test scores, middle class children are less likely to gain advantage than are poor or very wealthy children. Sacks concludes, "there is little doubt that the prevailing paradigm about merit has consistently reproduced social and economic advantages for the "dukes of the system," the relatively few who conform to widely held views of merit" (1999, p. 264).

Verbal Math Total

Ethnic Group

African American or Black	430 427 857
Mexican or Mexican American	446 457 903
Puerto Rican	455 451 906
Other Hispanic or Latino	458 464 922
American Indian or Alaskan Native	479 483 962
White	527 533 1060
Asian, Asian Amer., Pacific Islander	501 569 1070
Other	502 514 1016

Family Income

Less than \$10,000/year	417 442 859
\$10,000 - \$20,000/year	435 453 888 +29
\$20,000 - \$30,000/year	461 470 931 +43
\$30,000 - \$40,000/year	480 485 965 +34
\$40,000 - \$50,000/year	496 501 997 +32
\$50,000 - \$60,000/year	505 509 1014 +17
\$60,000 - \$70,000/year	511 516 1027 +13
\$70,000 - \$80,000/year	517 524 1041 +14
\$80,000 - \$100,000/year	530 538 1068 +27
More than \$100,000/year	555 568 1123 +55
ALL TEST-TAKERS	504 516 1020 (Approximately 1.3 million)

Figure 5. 2002 College Bound Seniors SAT Scores. Source: College Board, *College-Board Seniors National Report, 2002*

Ethnicity

African-American/Black	16.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	18.6
Mexican American/Chicano	18.2
Puerto Rican/Hispanic	18.8
Other	19.2
Multiracial	20.9
Asian American/Pacific Islander	21.6
Caucasian American/White	21.7

Household Income

Less than \$18,000/year	17.8
\$18,000 - \$24,000/year	18.6 +0.8
\$24,000 - \$30,000/year	19.4 +0.8
\$30,000 - \$36,000/year	19.9 +0.5
\$36,000 - \$42,000/year	20.4 +0.5
\$42,000 - \$50,000/year	20.8 +0.4
\$50,000 - \$60,000/year	21.3 +0.5
\$60,000 - \$80,000/year	21.8 +0.5
\$80,000 - \$100,000/year	22.4 +0.6
More than \$100,000/year	23.3 +0.9
ALL TEST-TAKERS	20.8 (1.1 million test-takers)

Figure 6. 2002 College Bound Seniors ACT Scores Source: *ACT High School Profile Report: H.S. Graduating Class of 2002 National Report*

College admissions scores are used for more than admissions, however. Scholarship awards are also based on SAT or ACT scores. In a letter to Florida's Governor Jeb Bush, Fairtest, MALDEF and others outline the problems:

While African Americans comprised 14.4% of all SAT and ACT takers, they received only 3% of all Academic Scholars Awards (100% funding) and only 8.3% of Merit Scholarship Awards (75% funding). Latinos, who made up 13.7% of all test takers, earned only 8.7% of the Academic Scholars Awards and 12.3% of Merit Scholarships. White students, by contrast, comprised 53.4% of test takers, yet received 76.3% of the Academic Scholars Awards and 71.5% of Merit Scholarships.

The use of SAT and ACT score cut-offs to determine eligibility is a major reason why proportionately few African American and Latino students received these lucrative scholarships. Students must score 1270 or higher on the SAT, or 28 or higher on the ACT, in order to qualify for Academic Scholars; the Merit Scholarship Award eligibility is set at a SAT of 920 or an ACT of 20. Yet in Florida the average SAT score was 857 for African Americans and 952 for Latinos, both of which are more than 300 points below the cut-off for the Academic Scholars Award. For Whites in Florida, the average score was 1044. Other measures of academic preparation, such as grades, do not demonstrate such a great racial disparity. It is the high test score minimums, particularly for the Academic Scholars program, that put receipt of these awards far out of the reach of many students of color. (FairTest, 2001)

The move away from needs-based and toward merit-based, such as in the Florida example, is happening in all parts of the country with similar results. In the Introduction to their edited collection, Heller & Marin (2002) parody the deleterious effects of such scholarships:

Imagine someone reacting to higher education's current situation by saying that what we needed were large new programs to subsidize white and middle- to upper-income students to attend college, and that it was not necessary to raise need-based aid even enough to cover new tuition increases. We would give some minority students entering awards because of their relatively high grade point averages from inferior segregated schools. However, we will take their aid away when they cannot get a "B" average in a vastly more competitive college setting and blame them for not being up to the task. A huge amount of money would go into this new program, far more than was spent for the need-based scholarships in some states. We would get the money from an extremely regressive tax—a state lottery that drew money disproportionately from poor and minority players. In other words, poor blacks and Latinos would end up paying a substantial part of the cost of educating more affluent white students, who would have gone to college even if they had not had the additional financial incentive. And to add insult to injury, colleges would cut their own financial aid funds, or shift these resources to give more money to high scoring students. In cases where the financial aid made more students eager to go to a particular institution in the state, rather than an out-of-state school where they would have to pay tuition, the in-state institution could raise its selectivity ratings by excluding students with lower scores, students who would usually be minority and from less affluent families.

Professional Licensure Tests

For minority and poor students who pursue professional degrees, graduating from high school, getting into college, and being able to afford it may mean being faced with yet more standardized tests to obtain a license to practice their chosen profession. For example, if a person aspires to be an accountant, doctor, lawyer, teacher, social worker, or police officer, s/he must pass a standardized test required either by a professional association or a state regulatory agency.

In 1994, the Journal of the American Medical Association reported that women and minorities were more likely to fail Part I of the National Board of Medical Examiners test (Dawson, 1994). In 1996, the Louisiana State Police Commission agreed to discontinue a written entrance exam for police cadets and to develop a new test that does not discriminate against African Americans in a settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice. After repeated tries, 97% of whites and 78% of African American pass the bar exam as reported in a study by the Law School Admission Council in 1998. In the late 1980s it was clear the most commonly used teacher test, the National Teachers Examination, barred disproportionate numbers of minority teacher candidates from teaching (Pritchey-Smith, 1987). This trend continues as forty-two states now require a teacher licensure test. In 1999, PRAXIS passing rates nationwide for white candidates were 82% and 46% for African Americans. A National Research Council report on teacher testing finds the tests lacking in validity, job-relatedness and likely to compound the desire to attract more minorities to the teaching profession (Mitchell, Robinson, Plake & Knowles, 2001). And so the story goes for other employment related tests for dockworkers, insurance agents, plumbers, pharmacists, and so on.

Building a K-16 Response to the Disadvantage Created by Standardized Testing

There is every reason to believe that access and quality of schooling is differentiated in this country and that differentiation is along race and class lines. Standardized testing plays a substantial role in maintaining this differentiation beginning in Kindergarten on through school and into access to

professions and jobs. This issue is one that must be addressed as a K-16 issue, not one isolated in either public schools or higher education.

A number of professional organizations that represent K-12 educators and professors have developed policy statements reflecting caution and concern about the impact of standardized testing, although these statements focus on testing in K-12. For example, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), American Evaluation Association (AEA), International Reading Association (IRA), National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies (CUFA/NCSS) have issued statements that caution against the use of singular measures for important educational decision-making; outline the detrimental effects of tests on teaching and learning; and point out the inherent racism and classism of standardized tests. (See <http://www.eval.org/hstlinks.htm> for a list of organizations with such statements.) These statements, as well as the complementary research agendas and political action campaigns, represent one step in building solidarity among practitioners (K-12 teachers and administrators) and researchers.

This K-16 alliance also includes parents, and the rise of grassroots organizations that combine the knowledge and resources of educators, researchers and parents are on the rise. (See <http://www.eval.org/hstlinks.htm> for a list of grassroots organizations, many of which are regional or state based, but some are national in scope, such as the Rouge Forum or the fledgling ACT NOW, Advocates for Children and Teachers National Organizing Workshop.) Some grassroots organizing and resistance to standardized testing has been facilitated by Fair Test, a not for profit advocacy organization devoted for many years to "ending the abuses, misuses and flaws of standardized testing and to ensur[ing] that evaluation of students and workers is fair, open, and educationally sound. [Fairtest] places special emphasis on eliminating the racial, class, gender, and cultural barriers to equal opportunity posed by standardized tests, and preventing their damage to the quality of education." (See <http://www.fairtest.org>.) Fair Test sponsors the Assessment Reform Network (ARN), "a national project created to support parents, teachers, students and others who are working to end the overuse and misuse of standardized testing in public education and to promote authentic forms of assessment." The goal of the ARN "is to open the doors to disadvantaged children by removing barriers to achievement, while improving the quality of education for everyone," through facilitating an exchange of ideas, resources and strategies among a wide audience.

Researchers are now beginning to see the common threads that can support examination and critique of testing as it employed across the K-16 educational spectrum. Elsewhere I have described the hegemony of accountability that is test-driven and illustrated how this is manifest in both K-12 and post-secondary contexts (Mathison & Ross, 2002).

Accountability is a means for controlling both procedures and outcomes in complex, bureaucratic environments. Education (primary, secondary and tertiary) is now in large part controlled through accountability schemes that are devised by those outside of schools and universities and represent a coalescing of political-business interests. The hegemony of that accountability lies in the particular interests served (those of political-business elites) which are often at odds with the interests of the public good, and the individuals who inhabit schools and universities. Accountability need not be hegemonic, but counter-hegemonic accountability requires a sharing of power and willingness on the part of the many to assert their right to determine what is good and right. Collective action by the many is necessary to counter the hegemonic interests of the few.

There is little reason to believe that current test based reforms in pre-collegiate, collegiate and professional education will redress the inequities between white and minority students and between those living in poverty and those not. Indeed this testing has the potential to further deepen and divide Americans along

race and class lines. These deep divisions are long standing and often seem intractable, and thus call for a political action-oriented response across the span of K-16 education.

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