



Marker, P. (2003). Another Brick in the Wall: High Stakes Testing in Teacher Education—The California Teacher Performance Assessment. *Workplace, 10*, 132- 143.

PERRY MARKER

**ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL: HIGH STAKES TESTING IN
TEACHER EDUCATION —**
The California Teacher Performance Assessment

*We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teacher leave the kids alone
Hey teacher leave us kids alone
All in all it's just another brick in the wall
All in all you're just another brick in the wall
—Roger Waters, 1979*

1.1 Roger Waters wrote these words for the 70's rock icon group Pink Floyd before it became fashionable to place the blame for education's "failures" on the shoulders of our teachers. In today's world, blaming teachers and professors for the education's perceived "failures" is part of the conservative culture of criticism that has made teachers the culprit in every imaginable aspect of education decline.

1.2 We blame P -12 teachers and university professors for the "failure" of the schools. We blame them on a lot of levels. We blame their professional teacher education; we blame what they teach; we blame how they teach. The simplistic and punitive reform efforts that have resulted in the creation of standards and the development of high stakes testing reflect the fact that, for over twenty years, teachers in public schools and institutions of higher education have been blamed for all that is wrong with education.

1.3 This paper will briefly explore the context for standards in public schools and universities in California beginning with Proposition 13, and the relationship between standards and the latest volley in the quest for standardization of the curriculum aimed at teacher education--the California "Teacher Performance Assessment."

The Initiative Process: a Non-Deliberative Democracy

2.1 The passage of Proposition 13 in 1975¹ (Jarvis-Gann) is a good milestone by which to examine post World War II California. In California, an interesting dichotomy was created in the 1970's. First, the postwar exhilaration that brought a huge investment in the public infrastructure era and a strong commitment to the development of quality education systems and other services. Second, as the economy faltered, it began to create a generation of declining confidence in government and shrinking public services (Schrag, pp. 10-11). This dichotomy between a value in huge investment in the public sector and the squeeze on public services that Proposition 13 brought about, came at the time California was experiencing significant demographic change--moving from a society that thought of itself mostly as white, middle class, to one in which whites became another minority.² Latinos, Asians, and African Americans now constitute a sizable majority of school enrollment and the use of public services.

2.2 The revolt against government taxation that Proposition 13 set in motion in California resulted in the increased use of the initiative process. Initiatives--once a bastion of "the people" and their power to influence public policy--are now most often used by well-organized political and economic entities on the left and the right, and by incumbent politicians from the government on down. It is those interest groups, backed by media consultants, direct mail specialists, pollsters and others, that usually finance the signature drives that cost millions of dollars to get measures on the ballot. And, it is the advertising campaigns that drive the support for the initiative, or effectively block, through the influx of millions of advertising dollars, the measures of its opponents (Schrag, 1998, p. 11).

2.3 It is interesting to note that the further the initiative process proceeds, the more problematic effective citizenship becomes. Each initiative moves control further from the public and the legislature, and closer to the special interests. This non-deliberative democracy, as found in the California style initiative process, has no public hearings, no rules of procedure, no formal debates, and no informed voice. Non-deliberative democracy fails to present downside arguments, to outline implications, to control the cost, or, most significantly, to speak for minorities. On the national scene, some twenty-four states have some form of initiative or referendum in their constitutions. And, there is increasing pressure to use it as an agent of political reform. Non-deliberative democracy, based on the initiative process, is undermining the people's faith in our democratic processes.

2.4 During the period of time since Proposition 13, initiatives have been passed that imposed specific spending formulas on schools, abolished affirmative action in public education, denied public schooling and public services to illegal immigrants, and eliminated bilingual education. California's schools, which thirty years ago had been among the best funded on the planet, are now in the bottom quartile among states in virtually every major indicator of educational progress and success. California has an average class size of over 32, and in many cases, especially in poor white and minority areas, there are over 40 students in classrooms designed for 25. To compound the problem, a vast majority of California's educational facilities are at least 30 years old, and many are over 40 years of age, and are in various and dangerous states of disrepair. In California, we have chosen to spend less on education and more on prisons.³ California is currently 41st out of 50 states in per capita educational spending. The fact is, that during the past twenty-five years, the best educational system in the world has been fundamentally and systematically dismantled.

2.5 Lost in this plethora of initiatives, budget cuts and decline of funding, is the fact that despite what politicians on both sides of the aisle and the popular press would like us to believe, during the last decade standardized scores have been holding relatively steady, with modest increases in both math and reading scores (Berliner and Biddle, 1998). In an international comparison United States nine year olds were second only to Finland's nine year olds, and United States' fourteen year olds finished ninth, well above average, and a few points from the top (Bracy, 1992). This despite the fact that more students are taking the tests than ever before whose first language is *not* English. Berliner and Biddle conclude that there is

no support for the myth that American students fail in reading achievement, *or any other subject*. Simply put, schools are in better shape than we are led to believe. Teachers have done incredible work despite that fact that the educational system in California has been crumbling around them.

Standards and High-Stakes Testing: No Rich Kids Left Behind

3.1 As teachers have become convenient scapegoats for all that is wrong with education, “education reform” has turned its attention to students and punished them by the introduction of a plethora of standards and high stakes testing proposals.

Abraham McLaughlin in a recent Christian Science Monitor (2003) article states that critics of high-stakes testing in Massachusetts say that the exams “punish kids--not schools--for the [education] system’s failings...” (p. 2).

3.2 Standards and high stakes tests have used concepts such as "world class," "accountability," "competitive," and "standards" that are taken directly from the corporate world. Alfie Kohn (2002) makes the argument that "anyone whose goal was to serve-up our schools to the market-place could hardly find a shrewder strategy than to hold schools 'accountable' through wave after wave of standardized tests" (p. 117).

3.3 All too often, these proposals result in a racist, one-size-fits-all approach to education that is designed to present a singular and simplistic view of knowledge, truth, and learning that ignores the diverse needs of our children of color and those who live in poverty. These so-called “reform” efforts are intended to blame teachers and punish students for the problems of education by mandating a focus on drill and practice, and “teaching to the test,” instead of fostering students’ critical thinking skills. As a result of these efforts to blame teachers and punish students, teachers are relinquishing control of the classroom and curriculum solely to those who construct the tests.

3.4 Martha Rapp Ruddell (2001) quotes Elliot Eisner who reminds us that standards in education are not new; "they are in fact a 'recapitulation' of behavioral objectives that so preoccupied us in the 1960’s, and actually grew from the 'efficiency' movement in education from 1913-1930 that was based on an industrial model of high productivity." Ruddell goes on to further quote Eisner:

Uniformity in curriculum content is a virtue if one’s aim is to be able to compare students in one part of the country with students in others. Uniformity is a virtue when the aspiration is to compare the performance of American students with students in Korea, Japan, and Germany. But why should we wish to make such comparisons? (p. 11)

Susan Ohanian (in Ruddell, 2001) notes that framers of standards regularly ignore the developmental reality of adolescence. She says:

Now you and I know that anyone who says high schoolers should read *Moby Dick* 1) doesn’t know any fifteen year olds; 2) has never read *Moby Dick* or 3) has read *Moby Dick*, has a fifteen year old in the house, and wants to get even. (p. 12)

3.5 Perhaps the most astounding thing about standards and high stakes tests is the there is *no research evidence whatsoever* that their use enhances student achievement and learning (Black and Wilam, 1998). Still, tests have become so all consuming that more than 20 million school days were devoted to them in one year. The case for high stakes testing and standards is based on simplistic solutions designed to raise the self-esteem of politicians, businesspersons, and policy makers. High stakes tests, coupled with

standards, sustains and maintains a classist and corporate system of education where a small and select number of schools receive an embarrassment of riches.

3.6 Our fixation on standards and high-stakes testing was demonstrated when, the day after the tragic killings in Littleton, Colorado, high schools continued their scheduled standardized tests rather than postpone them and discuss the incomprehensible events that shocked students and adults throughout the country and world. One is left to wonder how high the scores were on that day of testing? Will teachers be blamed, yet again, for these “low” scores?

3.8 Things are bound to only get worse with standards and high-stakes testing. Schools will lose funding or may even be closed if their test scores don’t improve. The test scores of schools will be compared with others as to how well they do on the tests. Teachers in “low performing” schools may be subjected to disciplinary pressures, and even firing if their students don’t score well on one test. And, “low performing” schools may be taken over by the state and/or assigned to for-profit corporate entities.

3.9 Standards and high-stakes testing determine the form of most teaching since, for any given exam, there is a “best way” to prepare for it. Repetition, forced memorization, rote learning and frequent quizzes leave precious little time for more creative approaches where students convey, exchange and question facts and ideas. With standards and high-stakes testing, course content is determined by the exam, leaving little time for any materials not on the exam, such as student reactions, reflection on main issues of the day, alternative points of view, or anything else that is likely to promote creative, cooperative or critical thinking .

3.10 High stakes tests have proven to be very reliable predictors of factors related to socio-economic class, and poverty. Standardized testing is a strong indicator of where the wealthiest schools are, and where children of poverty go to school. Students of color, second language learners, and children in poverty consistently score lower on all standardized tests. High-stakes tests are strong indicators that children of poverty get an education that does not compare to that received by wealthier, white students. With their enormously high price tags, what these tests do predict and ensure is that no rich kids will be left behind. The National Commission on Testing and Public Policy (1990) says that as early as 1990 standardized testing in America consumed more than \$900 million in one year. A decade later, the price tag is much, much higher.

3.11 Alfie Kohn (2002) argues that standardized testing promotes the presence of corporations, and a corporate ethos, in public schools. Kohn states that testing promotes a corporate mentality that does four things very effectively: 1) brings in hundreds of millions of dollars to the handful of corporations that produce the tests; 2) serves as a sorter and screener of students for the convenience of industry; 3) fosters a corporate ideology where assessment is used to compare and evaluate people in uniform ways; 4) shocks the public into a need to “improve” education through vouchers, and for-profit schools (p.116).

3.12 In addition to Kohn’s critique of the corporate influence on education, former Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), has issued this blistering analysis of the “the bottom line” agenda that businesses have when it comes to education:

In speech after speech, it is our corporate CEOs who state that an educated, literate work force is the key to American competitiveness. They pontificate on the importance of education. They point out their magnanimous corporate contributions to education in one breath, and then they pull the tax base out from under the local schools in the next. Business criticizes the job our local schools are doing and then proceeds to nail down every tax break they can get, further eroding the school’s ability to do the job. (in Bracey, 2002)

3.13 What testing and the corporate influenced “educational reform” movement reveal--more than any other factor--is the absolute certainty that testing does not serve the needs of *all* students in a democratic society, and the democratic goal to help *all* students become enthusiastic learners.

A Nation at Risk?

4.1 One can pinpoint in time when the clarion call for accountability began. In 1983, the Regan administration, amid much fanfare, released the incendiary report on the state of American education entitled *A Nation At Risk*, prepared by a prestigious committee under the direction of then Secretary of Education Terrell Bell. *A Nation At Risk* made sweeping claims attacking the conduct and achievement of America’s public schools and documented these claims by “evidence.”⁴

4.2 The “evidence” provided in *A Nation At Risk* made the case that the failures of the public schools were damaging the nation, and if not addressed, stood to weaken our democratic future. Though some of the claims had validity and were made to genuinely improve public education, a disproportionate number of these claims can be construed as blatant attacks that were contradicted by sound research-based evidence, and were outright hostile or untrue. As more and more of the attacks denouncing public education made the front pages of the news media and the six o’clock news, business persons and governmental leaders were endlessly repeating the attacks, and giving life to these distortions and falsehoods. Ironically, many prominent members of the educational establishment often supported the attacks that were endlessly reported by an unquestioning press (Berliner and Biddle, 1997). David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle (1997) in their examination⁵ of the rise of the standards and accountability movement argue that:

It is small wonder that many Americans have come to believe that education in our country is now in a deplorable state. Indeed, how could they have concluded anything else, given such an energetic and widely reported campaign of criticism, from such prestigious resources, attacking America’s public schools? To the best of our knowledge, no campaign of this sort has ever before appeared in American history. Never before had an American government been so critical of the public schools, and never had so many false claims been made about education in the name of ‘evidence.’ We shall refer to this campaign of criticism as the Manufactured Crisis. (p. 4).

4.3 The most recent results of the 34th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward Public Schools (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002) support the idea that there is a slowly forming disconnect between the public’s attitudes toward education and the critics unfounded attacks on education. The poll reported that national public support for, and reliance on, public schools is strong and increases as people have more contact with schools. This trend for public support of schools has been steadily rising since 1992.

4.4 Regarding testing, the public attitude toward testing remains remarkably stable over time. Even when the call for testing is increasing, 47% of those polled indicated that the amount of testing is about right, down from 48% in 1997. Thirty one per cent think there is too much testing, up from 27% in 1997. When asked which is the best way to measure student achievement--by means of test scores or by classroom work and homework--53% support classroom work and homework over test scores, while only 23% think test scores is the best way to measure student achievement. When asked how they would grade schools in their own community, 47% give schools an “A” or “B.” Interestingly, 24% think the schools in the nation deserve an “A” or “B”. When asked to grade the school their oldest child attends, a stunning 71% give that school either an “A” or “B.” Finally, 69% of those polled support reforming the existing system while only 27% think we should find an alternative to a “failing” system of schooling.

4.5 Seldom do we see these kinds of results that support the work of schools reported in the popular media. What seems to be the case is that the public is not inclined to believe negative and unfounded media reports when it comes to schools they know about, and trust to educate their children--even when they are being deluged with daily negative attacks in the media. In spite of a continued avalanche of unsupported attacks on public schools, the public remains, as it has for the past decade, unconvinced that schools are as terrible as their conservative critics suggest.

The California Teacher Performance Assessment

5.1 In the wake of the testing mania that swept through P-12 education like a firestorm, the hegemony of accountability and standardization of the curriculum has finally arrived at the door step of teacher education in the form of the California Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). Senate Bill 2042, signed into law by governor in 1998, requires all preliminary credential candidates to pass a high stakes teaching performance assessment, the TPA. The law provides that professional teacher preparation programs may use the TPA or they may develop their own assessment.⁶

5.2 Prototypes of the TPA were developed and piloted to measure thirteen Teacher Performance Expectations (TPE) or standards. The TPEs purportedly describe and measure on a singular exam “what California teachers need to know and be able to do” before receiving a preliminary credential. There are four performance tasks that collectively measure the TPEs in the following areas (adapted from the California Department of Education Pilot Draft of the TPA):

Task I: Principles of Content-Specific and Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy - students are asked to demonstrate knowledge of principles of developmentally appropriate pedagogy and current specific pedagogy from four specific prompts (see Appendix II for a summary of these prompts).

Task II: Connecting Student Characteristics to Instructional Planning - students demonstrate their ability to learn important details about a small group of learners and to plan instruction that is shaped by those student characteristics (see Appendix III for a summary of these tasks).

Task III: Classroom Assessment of Academic Learning Goals – students demonstrate their ability to use standards-based, developmentally appropriate student assessment activities with a group of students. Students will demonstrate their ability to assess student learning and diagnose student needs based on their responses to the assessment activity (see Appendix III for a summary of these tasks).

Task IV: Academic Lesson Design, Implementation and Reflection after Instruction - students demonstrate their ability to design a standards-based lesson, via a 20 minute video tape, for a particular group of students, implementing that lesson while making appropriate use of class time and instructional resources. They also show their ability to meet differing needs of individuals within the class, manage instruction and student interaction, assess student learning, and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson (see Appendix IV for a summary of these tasks).

5.3 Currently, many “early adopter” credential programs are engaged in piloting the TPA and its four tasks. These “early adopters” have been given the task of trying to determine how best to administer and field test the TPA. To date, little information is known regarding the success of the state’s pilot program. It is clear that the TPAs are being developed with little assistance from professors in teacher education programs. The state is offering a series of information only, technical assistance “training” workshops, offered so as to bring teacher education programs “up to speed” regarding the TPA. However, a closer examination of the TPA raises some interesting issues, questions and concerns.

The TPA: A Time -Worn, Top-Down Ideology

6.1 At first glance, the TPA is a somewhat innocuous measure of teaching effectiveness. It is based upon Teacher Performance Standards (TPE)--standards that, for the most part, remain unquestioned by most teacher educators. The four tasks that comprise the TPA assessment are based upon ideas in performance-based assessment that has been used widely by teacher educators across the country. Many educators believe the concept of examination to determine teacher readiness is not a bad idea. Witness efforts by the University of California and Stanford Universities to develop their own high stakes examinations as substitutes for the state developed and administered examination. These efforts to test remain unquestioned by even the most radical opponents of curricular standardization and the TPA. [7](#)

6.2 Many teacher educators object to the top-down nature of the TPA process. Not only does it ignore the knowledge and professional commitment professors have toward building effective teacher education programs, the TPA also moves the State of California's historical responsibility for teacher education from *accrediting* teacher education programs, to externally *controlling* and effectively *mandating* what should be taught and how it should be delivered in Universities. This is a major and historic change in policy. This change is viewed as political, and driven by a genuine mistrust of teacher educators--led by policy makers and large corporations (Kohn, 2002). More importantly, this top-down regulation undermines the ability of teacher educators to prepare highly qualified and effective teachers.

6.3 Bertell Ollman (2002) in "Why So Many Exams?" details eight myths that surround exams and testing in our society. Among these is the largely unquestioned belief *that exams are unbiased* and that it is *possible* to produce an exam that is "culture free." It is this largely unchallenged assertion that drives the examination mania that grips our culture. The fact remains that there is no singular high-stakes examination that has been proven to be totally unbiased.

6.4 More importantly, this myth of unbiased testing supports the assumption that a complex set of concepts and behaviors embedded in a yearlong teacher education curriculum *can* and *should* be measured in a singular examination.

6.5 Teaching is an ever-changing enterprise. It has been estimated that, in the course of a single day, a teacher makes thousands of decisions that impact the quality of education for their students and ultimately how well they perform the complex tasks of teaching.

6.6 In teaching, the ambiguity of not knowing what can and will happen from moment to moment is as frightening as it is challenging. To consider that the task of teaching *should* and *can* be measured by a *singular* high-stakes examination reduces the complex act of teaching to a fragmented, de-contextualized set of unrelated exercises that have no real meaning. The fundamental assumption that teaching can be simplistically measured by a single examination is folly, and not supported by research. Our views about testing in teacher education need serious re-examination.

6.7 Rather than testing prospective teachers, we need to be working with our future teachers to expand the idea of assessment to provide multiple, yet rigorous, ways for students to demonstrate what they know. We cannot expect prospective teachers in the 21st century to adopt new means of assessment in their curriculum and for their students, if their future careers are based upon a hackneyed, high-stakes testing ideology rooted in 19th century beliefs about testing. Among these beliefs is the time worn notion that students learn best when performing short, segmented tasks--stressing speed and neatness--to the ticking of a clock. This ideology is embedded in the work culture of late 19th century America where students were being prepared to work mindless, low skill, repetitive jobs in factories. Most would agree that the

world of the 21st century teacher has changed inestimably since the late 19th century. So why haven't our notions about assessment and testing?

Political Ramifications, Economic Costs

7.1 Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the TPA is the fact that its existence increases the likelihood that the scores it generates will be used for political purposes to compare students, institutions and ultimately professors. The TPA will serve as a bellwether--as has been done with most standardized tests--for the public as to the institutions that are "best" doing their job of educating teachers. The scores of students will most likely be reported to the public, with rewards and punishments being distributed accordingly. In response to this kind of application of standardized test scores, Nancy Kober (2002) reported that high stakes test scores do not seem to generalize to any other index of achievement other than their own. In fact, Berliner and Amrein (2002) discovered that in states where high stakes testing scores were on the rise, math scores on the NAEP, ACT and SAT fell. Put simply, the scores of high stakes tests do not transfer to learning in other areas. Higher education may wish to enter this highly questionable area of test score interpretation and application with some degree of trepidation.

7.2 There is also some discussion that individual TPA scores would be released to schools that are hiring new teachers for the purpose of screenings and evaluation. With the meaning of these test scores under question, such a development could possibly prevent hundreds of potential teachers from becoming employed based upon a singular score on the TPA.⁸

7.3 In an era of declining educational budgets, the economic costs of the TPA have yet to be resolved. However, the main accrediting body of teacher education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) has entered into a \$3.7 million contract with the Educational Testing Service to develop a prototype TPA examination. No exact figures have been agreed upon regarding the direct costs the TPA will have for Schools of Education, but it is clear that issues such as administering the test and "training" teachers to score the TPA exams will place additional burdens on already overwhelmed and under-supported schools of education. One educator stated that archiving the 20 minute video tapes (each tape must be kept for 5 years) and the voluminous supporting documents that are required of the TPA's four tasks will require that the California State University to "buy a barge and park it in the San Francisco Bay for the purpose of storing the tapes and documents that the TPA will generate."

7.4 Ultimately, some believe that the TPA may actually be part of a maneuver to discredit and weaken schools of education, and open the door to the idea that teacher education be disseminated by districts and private corporations, leaving schools of education out of the process. In the short run, the creation of the TPA will certainly seek to standardize the curriculum among Schools of Education and provide faculty with less of a voice in the development of a sound teacher education curriculum. In fact, curricula will be compromised and eliminated in order to fit the rigors of the TPA into current teacher education programs. The development and implementation of the TPA is an effort for the State of California not only to accredit teachers but also to dictate, in a top-down manner, how they should best educate teachers.

The High Stakes of the TPA

8.1 The TPA is the first volley for standardizing the curriculum of higher education. The TPA is a high-stakes process that holds severe consequences for students, professors and the university. Its ultimate success will determine how much teacher education and the university will succumb to even more demands of the standardization movement.

8.2 Teacher educators, not state bureaucrats or professional test makers, are best equipped to develop demanding, yet inclusive, proficiency exit standards that combine student portfolios and performance-based projects - not just one high stakes standardized test - to credential teachers.

8.3 Robert Ahlquist (2003) suggests that teacher educators should ask themselves some serious questions about their work: What kind of vision do we hold for teacher education? What kind of citizens do we hope to “grow” within the context of the American public school system? Do we want a school system that teaches people how to critically think and act from multiple perspectives on the world in which we live? In the 21st century, teacher educators need to involve parents, prospective and practicing teachers, community leaders and legislators in seeking answers to these fundamental questions regarding education in our 21st century democratic society.

8.4 If we are move to a new age of assessment that rejects time-worn 19th century idea ideas and practices, then multiple assessments must be adopted to determine the success of a program, provide information to students regarding their achievement, and hold schools responsible for how well taxpayers’ money is being spent to prepare high quality and effective teachers. It is time to demand that our nation, our state and our schools stop relying on a single, corporate influenced, standardized, and racist measure of student achievement, and adopt a variety of student assessments that:

1. are designed to provide feedback that improves student learning;
2. involve students, parents, teachers and the community collaborating for improved student learning and better schools;
3. allow a variety of measures that focus on individual student learning;
4. do not limit the curriculum to a singular, standardized assessment based on a high stakes approach.

8.5 University and teacher educators need to be reminded of the truly high stakes involved in the high-stakes examination called the TPA. The control of the curriculum and its assessment by teacher educators is at risk. A closer look at this latest initiative to standardize the teacher education curriculum by all who are interested in high quality teacher education is warranted.

8.6 In a significant study of 16 states that have implemented high stakes, high school graduation examinations, Amrein and Berliner (2002) reported, among other things, that high-stakes tests are associated with 1) higher numbers of low performing students being retained in grade before pivotal testing years to ensure that students are properly prepared to take high stakes tests; 2) higher numbers of low performing students being suspended before testing days, expelled from school before tests, or being reclassified as exempt because they are Special Education or Limited English Proficient (LEP) – strategies that prevent low-scoring students from taking high stakes tests; 3) higher numbers of urban school teachers, in particular, are “teaching to the test,” limiting instruction to only those things sure to be tested, requiring students to spend hours memorizing facts, and drilling students on test taking strategies; and 4) because the subjects of art, music, science, social studies and physical education are often not tested, teachers and administrators focus less on these subjects as high-stakes testing dates approach.

8.7 These results reflect the ademocratic nature of high-stakes examinations; this may soon be the plight of higher education as high-stakes exams like the TPA are implemented. High-stakes exams are shaking the very foundations of a democratic education in a free society; yet another brick in the wall in the struggle for the control of the curriculum that is the standards-based/high-stakes/accountability movement.

8.8 If allowed to become part of teacher education, the TPA could result in a loss of control over the teacher education curriculum, and a de-validation of the professional responsibilities of teacher educators. But most significantly, future teachers may become deskilled, degraded and driven by the prescribed methods of a state driven curriculum, rather than becoming the critically aware, intelligent, well-informed professionals who are so desperately needed to maintain a healthy and productive democratic society.

Notes

¹ In the face of soaring property taxes, Proposition 13, passed in 1978, rolled back property values to 1975 levels and could be raised no more than 2 percent a year for inflation until the property was sold and transferred, at which point it could be reassessed at the purchase price. The tax rate was limited to 1 percent on the value of each parcel, with the legislature determining how that 1 percent apportioned among the various local agencies that had previously set their own tax rates. Henceforth, local agencies, including schools, would be effectively prohibited from issuing any new bonds. (This was mended in 1986 when school districts were given authority to issue construction bonds if they were approved by a two thirds vote of the electorate) Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann, sponsors of Proposition 13, believed that schools should not be funded by property taxes.

² The California Department of Public finance reports that the population of California in the year 2000 is 49% white, 35% Latino, 12% African American.

³ This comes as a direct result of the three strikes initiative, Proposition 184. The California Legislative Analyst predicts that prison costs will be \$3 billion by 2003 and \$6 billion by 2020.

4 A Nation At Risk makes for interesting reading as a historical document. It leads the way in to what resulted in endless legislation, and standards that led to the present day accountability educational reform movement. In it, many claims were made regarding the “failures” of the public schools and how these “failures” were confirmed by “evidence.” None of the supporting “evidence” actually appeared in the document nor did the manuscript provide citations to inform the reader where the “evidence” might be found.

5 Berliner and Biddle counter the myths and lies of the attack on America’s public schools by discussing and displaying evidence that has so often been misrepresented by critics. Some myths they counter are: 1) student achievement in American primary schools has recently declined; 2) American spends money on its schools than other nations; 3) The productivity of American workers is deficient, and this reflects the inadequate training they receive in American schools; 4) Recent increases in expenditures for education have been wasted or have merely gone into unneeded raises for teachers and administrators. Berliner and Biddle persuasively argue that none of the attacks on public education have merit and cannot be supported by the data.

6 To date, the University of California at Berkeley, and Stanford University are in the process of developing their own, alternative, assessments. Undoubtedly, more institutions will follow this expensive lead or perhaps purchase the exams created by teacher educations specialists rather than state department bureaucrats.

7 On September 10 2002 the Social Justice Cluster in the School of Education at San Diego State University following considerable deliberation, passed this motion which is now being circulated among Schools of Education throughout California:

"We reject the TPA process for which we initially volunteered, in good faith. Our experience with the process leads us to conclude, furthermore, that we must reject the standards that give the process motion, and the law which gives it force. We believe this is not a process to improve teacher education, but to regulate and standardize knowledge, not only in colleges of education, but throughout the university system, in a manner which is not in the best interest of our students nor ourselves. We believe the standards are partisan standards, the tests that will follow will be partisan tests, with profound problems of class, race, linguistic, and disability bias. Therefore, we call upon all college of education faculty in the CSU system to follow our lead, so say no to this intrusion. Moreover, we will inform our students and the community of our action in hopes that we will be able to spark additional resistance to the one-size-fits-all high-stakes testing movement which we believe will not improve assessment, but deepen segregation and promote the irrational worship of exam scores---scores which measure, above all, inherited capital. We believe that while we are indeed working within a state teacher credential program, we have rights of academic freedom which not only make it possible for individuals to reject this proposed regulation, but which exist as a treasure to the community, reflecting the vital role of a university where people can gain and test knowledge in a reasonably free atmosphere, and to offer that society criticism which may not be possible elsewhere."

8 Responding to the above proposal, the literacy faculty in the School of Education at San Diego State University proposed an alternate resolution:

"Today, the School of Teacher Education elected not to proceed with the field testing of the TPA, for many valid pedagogical and timing reasons. We also asked our Dean to pursue the collaborative effort being undertaken by the UCs and Stanford to arrive at an assessment that is more relevant and meaningful. While we deplore the ill-considered policy decisions, we do not reject SB2042 or the Teacher Performance Expectations."

References

- Ahlquist, R. (2003) "Challenges to academic freedom: California teacher educators mobilize to resist state-mandated control of the curriculum," *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 30(1).
- Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1997). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, frauds and the attack on America's public schools*. New York: Longman.
- Bracey, G.W. (1992). International comparisons and the condition of American education. *Educational Researcher*, 25(1), 5-11
- Bracey, G.W. (2002). "The 12th Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*. Available online: http://www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/whats_right/bracey_2002.pdf
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998, October) Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappa*. Available online: <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbla9810.htm>
- Kober, N. (2002, June). Teaching to the test. *TestTalk for Leaders*. Washington, DC: Center on Educational Policy.

- Kohn, A. (2002). The Gorilla in the classroom,” *Phi Delta Kappan*. Available online:<http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/500pound.htm>
- McLaughlin, A. (2003, January 13). “One cautionary tale about school reform,” *Christian Science Monitor*. Available online:<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0113/p03s01-uspo.html>
- Phi Delta Kappan (2002, September). “34th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public’s Attitudes Toward Public Schools”, *Phi Delta Kappan*. Available online: <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0209pol.htm>
- National Commission on Testing and Public Policy. (1990). *From gatekeeper to gateway: Transforming testing in America*. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.
- Ollman, B. (2002, October). Why So Many Exams, a Marxist response. *Z Magazine*. Available online :<http://www.zmag.org/zmagsite/oct2002/feature/ollman1002.htm>
- Ruddell, M. R. (2001). *Teaching content reading and writing* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Schrag, P. (1998) *Paradise lost: California’s experience, America’s future*. New York: The New Press.