Standardized Testing

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Introduction to Early Childhood

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“School must be about achieving a balance between developing the intellectual, emotional, and social selves of an individual” (Barrier-Ferreira 2008). This quote represents the difficult and necessary task educators have. While the intellectual part of school is very important, the environment of the classroom is also equally important. In the article “Producing Commodities or Educating Children, Nurturing the Personal Growth of Students in the Face of Standardized Testing,” the problem of trying to balance standardized testing with social growth is presented. In this article the author tells of how standardized testing is taking away from the social learning and growing the children originally had.

First of all, standardized testing creates chaos and tension for students and teachers. Teachers feel as though the pressure put on them to produce high testing scores does not leave enough room to teach moral and social values needed to be a successful adult. The students feel pressured by the non-flexible schedule to cram in all the information needed for the next test. Everyone, including administration, stresses out over the test scores the school receives due to the fact funding relies on the scores.

A second problem with the emphasis of standardized testing is the lack of time for social events and bonding. The author talks about a breakfast club started by the faculty in order to create bonds with all students and teachers. This breakfast was held two days a month before school, and was a great way for the students to learn about each other, to see school as a fun place, and to lift some of the stress that comes with a full academic day. One morning the breakfast ran over, and the principal was not pleased with the fifteen minute delay of learning.
She took the teachers aside and asked them how they were going to make up this instruction time. This is a great example of how programs that include standardized testing such as No Child Left Behind and Goals 2000 take away all of the personality schools once possessed due to the taxing schedule required to do well on the tests.

Students in elementary schools no longer have activities that develop the whole child. Holiday activities and game days are cut short due to the need to prepare for the tests. Students need socialization in order to have personal growth, which is equally as important as intellect. “The whole child is not simply composed of intellect but is emotional and spiritual as well” (Greene 2007). By focusing on standardized testing schools are no longer producing well rounded students ready for the rest of the world. An existential part of an education involves much more than learning information for a test.

This article is significant for me as a future teacher because it allows me to become aware of the growing problem standardized testing is creating. I now know to implement more social and informal activities into my classroom in order to ensure the child’s spiritual and social growth. I can take ideas such as the breakfast club, and make sure each child has some way of getting to know me personally and the other children outside of the class. While learning intellectual ideas is a great part of school, I now also believe personal interactions are equally as important. I can start thinking of ideas and ways to create an environment that allows intellectual learning and social learning to work together. If federal education programs continue to put pressure on test scores, it is important as ever for me as an educator to work hard and make sure students can succeed on the tests as well as socially in the classroom.