

Educators' Vision

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Teachers at Garfield High Say MAP Test is Counterproductive, Say They'll Refuse to Waste Students' Time, School's Resources

SEATTLE – In perhaps the first instance anywhere in the nation, teachers at Seattle's Garfield High School will announce this afternoon their refusal to administer a standardized test that students in other high schools across the district are scheduled to take in the first part of January. Known as the MAP test, it purports to evaluate student progress and skill in reading and math. The teachers contend that it wastes time, money, and precious school resources.

"Our teachers have come together and agree that the MAP test is not good for our students, nor is it an appropriate or useful tool in measuring progress," says Kris McBride, who serves as Academic Dean and Testing Coordinator at Garfield. "Additionally, students don't take it seriously. It produces specious results, and wreaks havoc on limited school resources during the weeks and weeks the test is administered."

McBride explained that the MAP test, which stands for Measure of Academic Progress, is administered two to three times each year to 9th grade students as well as those receiving extra support services. The students are told the test will have no impact on their grades or class standing, and, because of this, students tend to give it little thought to the test and hurry through it. In addition, there seems to be little overlap between what teachers are expected to teach (state and district standards) and what is measured on the test.

Despite this flaw, McBride states, results of the MAP tests will be used by district officials to help evaluate the effectiveness of instructors who give the test. "Our teachers feel strongly that this type of evaluative tool is unfair based on the abundance of problems with the exam, the content, and the statistical insignificance of the students' scores," she says.

Refusing to administer a district-mandated test is not a decision the school's teachers made casually, or without serious internal discussion.

"Those of us who give this test have talked about it for several years," explained Mallory Clarke, Garfield's Reading Specialist. "When we heard that district representatives themselves reported that the margin of error for this test is greater than an individual student's expected score increase, we were appalled!"

After the affected faculty decided unanimously to

make a stand against the MAP test, they told the rest of Garfield's faculty of their decision. In a December 19 vote, the rest of the school's teachers voted overwhelmingly to support their colleagues' refusal to administer the test. Not a single teacher voted against the action. Four abstained from voting, the rest voted to support it.

"We really think our teachers are making the right decision," said student body president Obadiah Stephens-Terry. "I know when I took the test, it didn't seem relevant to what we were studying in class— and we have great classes here at Garfield. I know students who just go through the motions when taking the test, did it as quickly as possible so that they could do something more useful with their time." History teacher Jesse Hagopian said, "What frustrates me about the MAP test is that the computer labs are monopolized for weeks by the MAP test, making research projects very difficult to assign." Hagopian added "This especially hurts students who don't have a computer at home."

The \$4 million MAP test was purchased by Seattle Public Schools during the tenure of former Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson, who left her position in 2011 and sadly passed away in 2012. Goodloe-Johnson sat on the board of directors of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), the company that markets the MAP test. At the time, some pointed out this potential conflict of interest for Goodloe-Johnson, but the district went ahead with the purchase nonetheless. NWEA itself warns that districts should not use the map test to evaluate teachers. We teachers of Garfield High School believe that the NWEA is right—this test should not be used to evaluate teachers. For secondary teachers the test cannot provide useful information about students' skills and progress. Still worse, this test should not rob students of precious class time away from instruction. "We believe the negative aspects of the MAP test so outweigh the positive ones that we are willing to take this step," said Language Arts teacher Adam Gish.



Next Meeting

**Sunday,
February 3rd, 1pm
Garfield Community
Center
2323 East Cherry St,
98122**

Gets a Failing Grade

have been killed by U.S. drones in the name of the “War on Terror.” As journalist Glen Greenwald wrote, “Consider this irony: Monday was the three-year anniversary of President Obama’s cruise missile and cluster-bomb attack on al-Majala in Southern Yemen that ended the lives of 14 women and 21 children: one more child than was killed by the Newtown gunman.”

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s call for gun control was full of self-righteousness: “Words alone cannot heal our nation. Only action can do that. Gun violence is a national epidemic. I demand a plan. The time for talk is over.”

Yet Mayor Bloomberg oversees a police force, larger than many country’s standing armies, which has a brutal history of gun violence perpetrated against African Americans and people of color.

One of the latest examples was unarmed 18-year-old African-American Ramarley Graham who was shot dead in his own bathroom in front of his grandmother and 6-year-old brother on February 2 by New York police officer, Richard Haste.

Nationally, a recent study revealed that a Black person is killed by police somewhere in the United States every 36 hours. This unchecked police terror is robbing families of their children, and yet you won’t hear a politician with the bravery to talk about gun control for trigger-happy officers.

The United States is currently engaged in the longest war in our nation’s history—now having devastated Afghanistan for over 11 years, leaving many thousands of Afghanis dead as well as over 2,000 U.S. soldiers. The nation has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to occupy Afghanistan, yet every single elementary school counselor in Seattle last year was laid off for lack of funds.

Any society that is so completely organized around the idea of killing “the enemy” should not be surprised when some alienated individual redefines the enemy and commits the kinds of horrendous atrocities that our government boasts about committing around the world.

The idea of arming my son’s preschool teacher as a safety measure is unspeakably senseless. So, too, is spending more to bomb schools in the Middle East than to build them at home. If we truly want to work to end killing sprees, rather than just express outrage over the next one, we must address underlying causes of violence in our society. This would require reorganizing our education system and our society away from its focus dedication to mass incarceration and endless war, and instead toward collaboration, em-

Diane Ravitch gives support to Garfield High School Teacher for Refusing the MAP test

To the Teachers of Seattle:

Congratulations on taking a stand against the misuse and abuse of standardized testing.

Congratulations for defending the ethics of genuine education.

Congratulations on supporting your students’ right to good education, not just endless testing.

Congratulations for supporting true professionalism.

Congratulations [on] for displaying courage, wisdom, intelligence, and integrity!

That is an unbeatable combination.

May your actions be an inspiration for teachers, principals, administrators, school boards, and parents across the nation.

Thank you for your example!

Diane Ravitch

pathy, and solidarity. A society that marshaled its resources and rallied its people, not to “kill the enemy”, but to provide healthcare, housing, and education, would produce a very different kind of citizen.

We could start by rehiring the elementary school councilors and supporting kids from a young age who need someone to talk with. By investing in social programs and education we could prove, indeed, that the stick of chalk is mightier than the gun.

*Jesse Hagopian is a public high school teacher in Seattle and a founding member of Social Equality Educators (SEE). He is a contributing author to *Education and Capitalism: Struggles for Learning and Liberation* and *101 Changemakers: Rebels and Radicals Who Changed US History* (Haymarket Books). Hagopian serves on the Board of Directors of Maha-Lilo—“Many Hands, Light Load”—a Haiti solidarity organization.*

