

# FIXING OUR NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

“Accountability: The obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform.”

-Webster's Dictionary



# SYSTEM

By Marc S. Tucker

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## IN PRAISE OF *FIXING OUR NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM*

As usual, Marc Tucker has provided all of us an effective, fact-based way forward, this time in the area of accountability. Until we start to amend our shortsighted, top-down approach in America and start to involve the field of educators, we will not succeed. Marc cites lessons from the top performing countries of the world. State leaders should not just listen to Marc, they need to take action!

**David Driscoll, Former Massachusetts Commissioner of Education**

As always, Marc Tucker's analysis of the problem – in this case educational accountability and testing in America – and his proposed solutions are insightful, provocative, and worth serious consideration. He doesn't shy away from the need for accountability or the use of test score data in such a system. Rather, he asks who should be accountable for what and in what ways, drawing upon examples from across the globe. And he proposes building an integrated system where assessment is balanced in its use such that it supports teaching and learning in contrast to the current practice of using test score data to denigrate the very individuals entrusted with the role of educating our youth.

**James W. Pellegrino, Co-Director, Learning Sciences Research Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago**

Mr. Tucker makes a bold statement that it is now time to look at this country's educational accountability system, and consider a re-design from the ground up. Much has been positively accomplished under the current No Child Left Behind model, however, as educators and leaders seek to innovate, creating systems that will ensure that students are at the center of the learning environment and that each student leaves K-12 education competent and confident, ready to succeed in either college or career, a one-size fits all model will no longer work. We truly need to engage students, educators, parents, and other key stakeholders in this re-design. This report makes a strong and elegantly written case for change.

**Virginia M. Barry, Commissioner of Education, State of New Hampshire**

NCEE's report offers a cogent critique of the negative consequences on teaching and learning that have been produced by our nation's current regime of standards and assessments. The report's recommendations offer a feasible and constructive path toward building an accountability system that will guide teaching and learning and foster meaningful support for school improvement and accountability.

**Warren Simmons, Executive Director, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University**

Marc Tucker and NCEE take a massive and authoritative step in the right direction for teacher quality, higher standards and more equitable outcomes by setting out the overwhelming evidence for a new and better system of educational accountability. Instead of blue-collar and bureaucratic accountability, Tucker shows, we need responsible professional accountability that will build excellence among the many rather than skewing a whole system in the wrong direction by punishing and haranguing a wayward few. Tucker's reasoning is not sentimental or ideological but just relentlessly consistent with the evidence of high performance everywhere.


**Andy Hargreaves, Brennan Chair in Education, Boston College and co-author of *Professional Capital: transforming teaching in every school***

It will not be possible for the United States to compete successfully in global commerce if it continues to recruit its teachers from the lower ranks of its high school graduates, trains them poorly and pays them far less than its high status professionals. To hold our teachers accountable for the poor performance of America's students under such conditions is unfair and foolish. This report lays out a plan for rebuilding the American education system that rests on the same kinds of policies being pursued by the countries that are eating America's lunch. We should be implementing these policies with all deliberate speed.

**William Brock, Former U.S. Senator and Former U.S. Secretary of Labor**

Marc Tucker is one of our nation's most creative thinkers about education. In this provocative report, he draws on global strategies to paint a picture of one new approach to accountability in education. His ideas for building and supporting a strong profession of teaching and using fewer and more thoughtful assessments to inform school improvement hold the seeds of a more productive path forward.

**Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education and Founding Director, Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education**

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# **FIXING OUR NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

by Marc S. Tucker

The National Center on Education and the Economy®





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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No Child Left Behind radically shifted the balance of power in American education policy-making from the states to the federal government, not because a new consensus had emerged to make such a shift, but because both Democrats and Republicans were angry with the nation's teachers, holding them responsible for a massive increase in the costs of our schools, while failing to deliver much in the way of improved student performance in return. The President and the Congress were united in their determination to hold the teachers accountable for that failure and to get value for their money.

But I argue here that, though teachers should be among those held accountable for the failure of the American schools to perform, many others are no less responsible for that failure and should be no less accountable. It is particularly ironic that we are holding our teachers accountable, considering that it was not the teachers, but rather the public, school boards and the Congress that maintained for years a schools policy based on the use of cheap teachers, a policy that placed little value on teachers' skills or mastery of subject matter, and deprived teachers of any hope of a real professional career in teaching and of any chance of

gaining the kind of status enjoyed by high status professionals in the United States.

We got what we deserved. Other countries have pursued very different policies, with much better results. Although many of them, like the United States to this day, long had policies that treated teachers like blue-collar workers and held them accountable in the ways that blue-collar workers are held accountable for their work, the top performing countries have abandoned those policies for policies designed to compensate, recruit, educate, train and manage their teachers in ways that are very similar to the ways in which they compensate, recruit, educate, train and manage their doctors, accountants, attorneys, architects and other high status professionals. And they are much more likely than we are to hold their teachers accountable in ways similar to the ways in which they hold their high status professionals accountable.

The thesis here is that one cannot divorce the design of the accountability system for education from the gestalt of the entire education system, and, in particular, the way in which the system treats its teachers overall. No nation is likely to get the kind of results now demanded in the leading industrial

nations unless it is successful at attracting to teaching young people who have the option of entering the high status professions, and it will not succeed in doing that unless it provides professional conditions of work to its teachers. One of the most important among those conditions is the design of the accountability system.

The test-based accountability system now universally mandated in the United States—a system that reflects in every way the blue-collar conception of teaching as an occupation—has had ten years to prove itself. The result is very low teacher morale, plummeting applications to schools of education, the need to recruit too many of our teachers from the lowest levels of high school graduates, a testing regime that has narrowed the curriculum for millions of students to a handful of subjects and a very low level of aspiration. There is no evidence that it is contributing anything to improved student performance, much less the improved performance of the very low-income and minority students for which it was in the first instance created.

The system proposed in this paper would replace the current system of test-based accountability with a system that would continue to provide data on overall school performance, on the performance of vulnerable groups of students within the school, and on all students at key points in a student's career. But it would do so in a way designed to improve the curriculum, better

serve students from all backgrounds, and make it far more likely that the schools will be able to attract high quality teachers and allocate those teachers fairly among students of all backgrounds.

Most important, it would replace a blue-collar system of accountability with a professional system of accountability, in the process creating very strong incentives for all teachers to work hard and constantly to improve their professional competence or get out of teaching. The mechanism for that would be a system in which teachers' main line of accountability would be not to their supervisor but to other highly motivated teachers.

The essence of the design is very simple. Instead of testing all of our students every year with low-level, cheap tests, our students would take high stakes tests only three times in their whole school career. These tests would be much higher quality tests, testing much more of the kinds of skills and knowledge now demanded for careers that are satisfying and pay well. And these high quality tests would cover the whole core curriculum, so subjects like history, literature, science, social studies, music and the arts would not be slighted. There would be tests in mathematics and English language arts every other year in the off years, but they would be administered only to samples of students and only by computer, and would not carry high stakes either for the teachers or the students.

Both the universal census tests (tests that all students take) and the sampling tests would be used by state officials to identify schools that might be in trouble. Schools so identified would be visited by teams of expert teachers and school administrators who would be asked to identify problems in the school that needed to be addressed and provide a timeline for addressing them. The state would be responsible for providing the help that is needed to address the issues identified by the visiting team. In those cases in which the visiting team thought it was warranted, the state would either require the school district to provide additional teachers, arrange for the school to partner with a stronger school or its teachers to partner with stronger teachers or arrange for a strong school to partner with the weaker school until the performance of the weaker school reached parity with the stronger schools. If the district did not have the resources to make these strategies work, the state itself would take responsibility for making such arrangements. In many cases, the shift of additional teachers to the weak schools would be permanent, not temporary.

The proposal describes policies that would make it attractive for strong teachers and principals to work in schools that really need their help and for strong schools to partner with weak ones. Those policies are part of a larger set of policies designed to transform teaching into a high status

profession, policies that will make it possible and attractive for teachers to spend much more of the school day than at present working in teams to improve their own professional competence and to improve the performance of the school. In such schools, teachers work closely with one another throughout the week and would be in and out of each other's classrooms—observing, critiquing and suggesting improvements. They would be mentoring each other. Those at the highest levels of their career ladders would still be in the classroom, teaching, but they would also be building a new culture in the school, one devoted to the constant improvement of practice, a culture in which each teacher would be accountable to the others for the quality of their work. They would, in other words, be practicing the kind of accountability that professionals the world over practice.

Under this plan, a lot of data about each school would be published by the state on a public web site, the community would know when its school was chosen for a visit by an inspection team and would be privy to the inspection report and recommendations and would know when the state concluded that the school had been unresponsive to those recommendations. But no school would be rated A through F on such a web site or anywhere else, no teacher would be announced to have failed by virtue of the scores of his or her students on standardized

tests and no school would be judged to have failed to have made adequate yearly progress on the basis of student test scores alone.

The reader might well ask why one could expect an accountability plan so apparently toothless in comparison to what has already been tried to be more successful than the aggressive plan it would replace. There are two answers to this question. First, the plan that has been tried has not succeeded.

Second, several variations on the plan that is now proposed have succeeded, on a national, provincial or state scale, in most of the world's top performing jurisdictions. Perhaps it is time to give up on a plan that, according to theory, should have succeeded, but did not, in favor of a plan that has been shown to work, not once, in one place, but many times, in many places.



# FIXING OUR NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

## I. INTRODUCTION

When President George W. Bush took office, one of his very first acts was to send a short concept paper to the Congress laying out his ideas for a stunning transformation of national education policy. Congressman John Boehner, then chair of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, turned that paper into a House bill and Senators Ted Kennedy and Judd Gregg did the same for the Senate. The result was the legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).<sup>1</sup> Many congressional Republicans, a good number of whom had come in with Ronald Reagan and were convinced that the federal government had no business being involved in school policy at all, were astounded. Expecting the new Bush administration to roll back initiatives begun by President Clinton designed to create national standards for student performance, they never expected the new Republican president to call for an even more aggressive federal role in public school education.

But NCLB proposed a role for the federal government far more aggressive, indeed far more intrusive, than anything ever before proposed by an American president of either party. George W. Bush intended to create

a new regime under which any state that wanted federal money for education would have to create a new statewide accountability system under which the state would have to commit to a student academic performance standard that every student in the state would have to meet by 2014.<sup>2</sup> Each school in the state would have to be on a trajectory to produce that result, and would have to show year-by-year gains for its students—not just on average, but for each of several subgroups composed of particularly vulnerable students named in the law. If the students in a school were not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the objective, the board and administration could be replaced and the faculty could be fired.

American teachers, and their unions, were appalled. But Democrats in the Congress, who, up to that point, could usually be counted on to ally themselves with the teachers and their unions on matters really important to them, instead deserted them. The legislation passed the Senate by 83 votes.<sup>3</sup> The result can reasonably be described as the toughest education accountability legislation ever passed in a large industrial democracy, one in which the power of the national government to

intervene in matters related to schools and schooling was, at least in theory, sharply limited by the national Constitution.

Why had so few seen this coming? The answer, I think, is that everyone had assumed that the Democrats would continue to support both teachers and labor unions in a fight, as they had in the past, but those ties had gradually weakened as more Democrats realized that the relentless progress of global competition demanded a much better educated American workforce, and the schools were failing to deliver. My copy of Webster's Dictionary gives the first meaning of the word as "the obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform."<sup>4</sup> The law represented a bipartisan judgment that American teachers had failed to perform. And it laid out in detail the draconian consequences if that failure were to continue.

in favor of the idea of holding individual teachers accountable for the performance of the students they had taught.<sup>5</sup> The idea was based on the landmark research of William Sanders, which purported to show that the quality of a teacher as measured by the performance of his or her students on standardized tests dwarfed all other school influences on a student's academic achievement. But that research had been done years earlier and had little effect on public policy. It was Tom Kane, a Harvard professor with close ties to the Gates Foundation, who successfully advocated that Sanders' research be used as the lever to drive the idea of test-based accountability for teachers to the forefront of American policy. He was joined by Eric Hanushek and others who used Sanders' data to argue that teachers should be evaluated by measuring the value that a given teacher adds to the achievement

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### **NCLB paid no attention to the unwritten agreements that had restrained the federal role in education prior to its passage.**

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Just as many Congressional Republicans in 2001 expected George W. Bush to roll back President Clinton's push for federally mandated student performance standards, many Democrats expected President Obama to repudiate President Bush's draconian accountability program eight years later. That did not happen. In fact, from the teacher's point of view, the situation got worse. The first Obama administration largely scrapped the idea of holding the school accountable for student performance

of his or her students, and this evaluation data should be used to get rid of the worst teachers.<sup>6</sup> If, each year, the system got rid of its worst teachers, the argument went, in a few years, the United States would have a teaching workforce with the quality needed to make our students competitive with those in the countries with the most effective education systems.<sup>7</sup>

The Obama administration used the leverage it gained in the Great Recession



## II. HAVE AMERICAN TEACHERS FAILED TO PERFORM?

to put enormous financial pressure on the cash-strapped states and schools to use standardized tests to evaluate teachers' competence and to use that data to make important decisions about teacher retention, or, in plainer language, about which teachers would be fired and which would get to keep their jobs. School accountability was not abandoned, but it slipped into the background. Test-based teacher evaluation and accountability took the limelight.

### II. HAVE AMERICAN TEACHERS FAILED TO PERFORM?

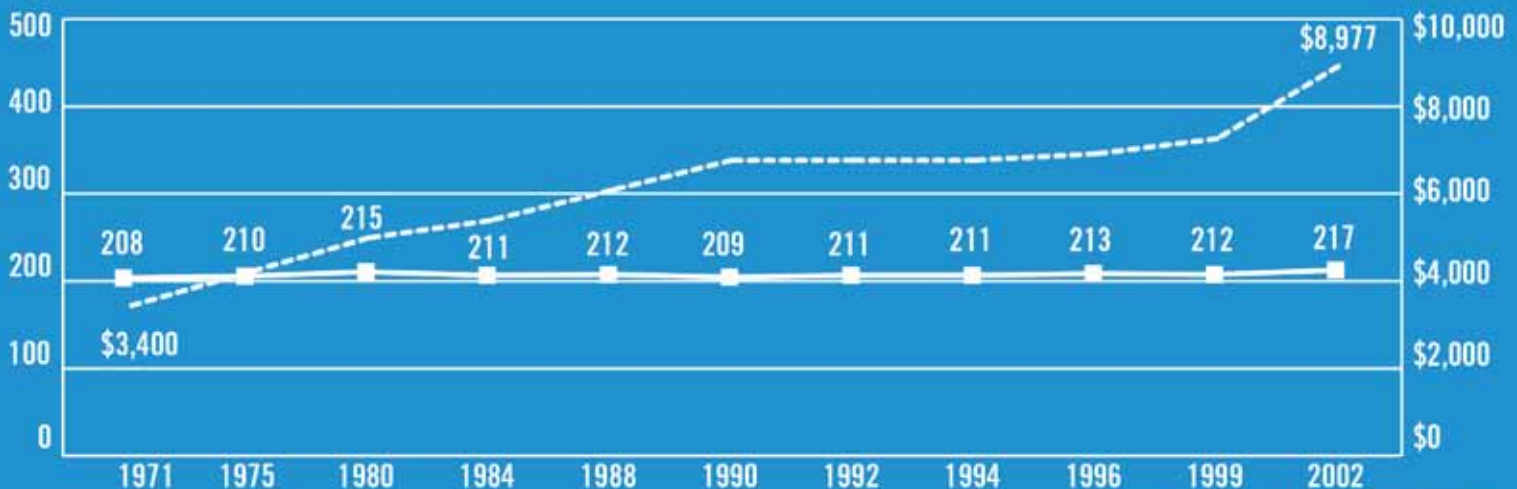
NCLB was the latest in a series of reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the landmark legislation passed during the Johnson administration, which inaugurated what turned out to be a flood of federal money for disadvantaged students over nearly half a century. *A Nation at Risk*,<sup>8</sup> the Reagan-era report released in 1983, purported to describe a picture of

unremitting decline in education system performance over the preceding two decades, though a more careful subsequent analysis of the data showed that the ESEA had indeed led to major gains for disadvantaged students.<sup>2</sup> But those gains moderated in the years that followed. By the time our own organization released *Tough Choices or Tough Times* in 2006, the data showed that, over the preceding 20 years, average performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 4th grade reading test over that 30-year period had hardly budged at all, but the cost per student had increased by 240 percent after accounting for inflation during the same period.<sup>10</sup> Both parties in Congress were fed up because they saw that an enormous amount of money had been spent with no perceptible results.

When the ESEA was first passed in 1965, the Congress assumed that, if they voted additional money that could only be used to aid in the education of poor and minority students, educators would know how to use



### PER PUPIL SPENDING AND NAEP 4TH GRADE READING SCORES 1971 TO 2002



Spending shown in constant 2002 dollars  
Source: NCES NAEP Trends in Academic Progress Through 1999; NCES Digest of Education Statistics 2003

that money effectively and the result would be improved student performance. Students were seen to be “disadvantaged” by virtue of their impoverished cultural background and in need of “compensatory” education that would compensate for their disadvantage. In other words, if the students were not learning, the fault lay in the background of the students, not in any lack of competence or commitment in their teachers, and if more funds could be provided to teachers to cope with the students’ cultural disadvantages, then they would learn.

Twenty years of disappointment ended that assumption. The Congress was angry, very angry. The teachers, said the Congress, should be held to account and the worst of them should be shown the door. Teacher failure was the problem and accountability was the answer.

The anger was real, but was it justified? Were there teachers who had given up years earlier and were just putting in their time, waiting for the day they could retire? Sure. Were there teachers who had never been very good but who had been protected for years from the consequences by their unions? Yes. Were there teachers whose command of the subject they taught was shaky at best? No doubt. But there is more to the story.

### III. THE SYSTEM WAS FAILING, BUT WAS THAT THE TEACHERS' FAULT?

It was actually the whole system that was not performing, not just the teachers. Yes, teachers should be held accountable for student failure. But the failure was not theirs alone. When it comes to “failure to perform,” there is a lot of that to pass around.

For a long time, the United States has operated its schools on the assumption that it could get the teachers it needed while calling them professionals but paying them far less than it paid most professionals, often less than it took to support a family.<sup>11</sup> Americans evidently thought it was perfectly okay to take a teacher trained in one subject and have them teach another—any other—subject, which could only have been true if Americans thought that it did not make any difference whether their children were taught by someone who actually knew anything about the subject being taught.<sup>12</sup> Legislatures routinely waived the very weak standards for entering the teaching profession in the face of a shortage, but we never do that for the professions requiring expertise that matters to us, like medicine, civil engineering and the law. In those professions, when a shortage develops, the market raises compensation until we have enough professionals to meet the need. But we have never been willing to allow the market for teachers to operate that



way. Evidently, the only thing that really mattered was that there was a warm body facing the students. In recent years, the United States had been celebrating programs that put recent college graduates in front of students as teachers with only a few weeks of teacher training.<sup>13, 14</sup> School boards, acting as if a teacher's skill and experience made no difference at all, were giving the toughest teaching assignments to the most inexperienced teachers. On the theory that one teacher was the same as any other, many were often eager to hire two cheap new teachers right out of teachers college to replace one experienced teacher whenever they could.<sup>15</sup>

decisions in our schools when they didn't want to pay for teachers' raises?<sup>17</sup> Wasn't it state legislatures that waived teacher-licensing requirements in the face of teacher shortages in the evident belief that teaching was something that anyone who could fog a glass could do? Why did our country decide that only teachers should be held accountable for student performance when the top performing countries decided that, first and foremost, the students should be held accountable?<sup>18</sup> Who should be accountable for student failure when a quarter of the nation's students live in poverty, a record not matched by any of the other industrialized nations?<sup>19</sup> Are we sure that the teachers are

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#### **What would accountability look like if we actually regarded our teachers as professionals doing professional work, instead of interchangeable blue-collar workers doing blue-collar work?**

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The whole system was treating its school teachers as if the work they did required little knowledge or skills—was in fact semi-skilled work—and the most important thing was to make sure that an adult was in front of the students, at the lowest possible cost to the public, regardless of the skills that adult brought to the job.

Wasn't it the public that decided to pay many teachers less than a living wage while the top performing countries were busy making sure that beginning teachers were paid about what beginning engineers were paid?<sup>16</sup> Wasn't it the school boards that gave teachers' unions ever-increasing control over management

the ones who should be held to account when they are led by an ineffective principal whose criterion for rewarding and punishing his teachers is the degree to which they were loyal to him last year?

The fact is that we are all to blame for the failure of the schools to deliver the performance we now demand of them. We do not have the teachers we deserve; we have better teachers than we deserve. Not so long ago, college-educated women had few career choices other than nursing, teaching and secretarial work. Most college-educated minorities had even fewer choices. The public could pay them far less than they

would have commanded for the education they had if the labor market was truly open and teachers had no choice but to accept it. Those days are over, and our labor markets are open to college-educated women and minorities, but you would never know it if you looked at the compensation for teachers, their benefits and their working conditions, which have not changed to accommodate the new realities. All we have to do to get the worst teachers we have had in a century is make no changes at all in public policy. Whose fault is that? What we have done is to blame the teachers for a complete failure of public policy to support our teachers and the profession of teaching. We will pay for that mistake for a long time to come.

## IV. ASKING MUCH MORE OF TEACHERS THAN WE EVER HAVE BEFORE

But this conception of the challenge so far assumes that the job that students and teachers have to do has not changed in many decades. And that is not true at all. The changes that have taken place in the dynamics of the global economy since the early 1980s have had profound effects on the skills and knowledge needed to have a successful career in the world's most developed nations.<sup>20</sup> Outsourcing of manufacturing and services to countries with much lower labor costs has combined with galloping automation to eliminate an ever-growing number of low-skilled

and semi-skilled jobs and jobs involving routine work.<sup>21</sup> The result is that a large and growing proportion of young people leaving high school with just the basic skills can no longer look forward to a comfortable life in the middle class, but will more likely face a future of economic struggle.<sup>22</sup>

The reality is that the majority of young people leaving our high schools have no more than an eighth or ninth grade level of literacy and a very poor command of middle school mathematics.<sup>23</sup> This does not represent a decline from some standard that high school graduates used to meet. It is as high as any standard the United States has ever met. And it is wholly inadequate now. It turns out, then, that we are now holding teachers accountable for student performance we never expected before, a kind and quality of performance for which the present education system was never designed. That is manifestly unfair.

This point is crucial for the national discussion of accountability. The system of education in the United States is essentially the same as the one first put in place at the turn of the 20th century. That is where we got the notions that all most students need are the basic skills, that teaching can be done by anyone with a few years of education beyond high school, that the craft of teaching can be learned in a few weeks, that most school subjects can be taught by anyone who went to college and studied anything while there. We have now

grown angry with our teachers for failing to teach our students to standards we never expected them to teach to before. Much more important, we are now expecting them to produce a kind and level of performance the system was never designed to produce, certainly never designed to produce on the scale now demanded.

Other nations, grasping the significance for education policy of the profound changes taking place in the global economy, understood the need to redesign their

performance. As modified by Race to the Top and the waivers the Secretary of Education has granted from the strictures of NCLB, it holds teachers accountable for student failure.

Russ Whitehurst and Katharine Lindquist, in a recent edition of the Brookings Brown Center Chalkboard,<sup>24</sup> talk about the “...undeniable advances in student achievement...during the era of high stakes accountability...” But we can find no evidence for that proposition. In

**Test-based accountability and teacher evaluation systems do not simply fail to improve student performance. Their pernicious effect is to create an environment that could not be better calculated to drive the best practitioners out of teaching and to prevent the most promising young people from entering it.**

education systems to accommodate the new demands for a far better educated and trained population. The United States failed to do that, instead choosing to adopt an accountability system that punished our teachers for failing to produce the improvements in student performance that could only be brought about by a thorough redesign of the education system.

And what has been the result of our choice of policies? That is the subject of the next section of this paper.

## V. THE FAILURE OF TEST-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

NCLB was written to hold schools accountable for failures in student

a speech he gave at George Washington University in the spring of 2013, Jack Jennings, the highly regarded former staff chief of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, who went on to found the Center for Education Policy, pointed out that there had been almost no improvement in student performance at all in the decade following passage of NCLB. While Jennings did not rule out the possibility that test-based accountability might show some positive effect later, and acknowledged the difficulty in drawing direct causal connections using data of this sort, nonetheless he pointed out that, in the circumstances, it would be hard to argue so far that test-based accountability of the kind mandated by NCLB had had a positive effect on student achievement.<sup>25</sup>

What is true for student achievement as a whole is also true for the achievement of the vulnerable groups that were the primary object of concern for the framers of NCLB. NAEP has been monitoring the national reading performance of 17-year-olds since 1971 and mathematics performance since 1973. The overall scores for that whole period have been stagnant. There was improvement for blacks and Hispanics early on, but it leveled off. Scores for 9- and 13-year-olds have risen over that period, in both reading and mathematics, but the rate of improvement before NCLB was passed was greater than the rate of improvement afterwards, except for Hispanic 13-year-olds.<sup>26</sup>

One cannot conclude from these data that test-based accountability caused leveling-off of performance among the disadvantaged students, but the fact that performance of these groups had been rising prior to the introduction of test-based accountability and leveled off after the introduction of test-based accountability hardly contributes to the evidence base for the continuation of this policy.

The absence of achievement data supporting a policy of test-based accountability should after all these years be reason enough to abandon that policy. But it is not. The damage that test-based accountability has done goes far deeper than a missed opportunity to improve student

achievement. It is doing untold damage to the profession of teaching.

Anyone who has been paying attention has by now seen many videos of widely admired teachers explaining to the camera why they are giving up teaching and why they would not recommend that their children, nieces or nephews choose teaching as their career. The narrative is always the same. They have loved teaching because it has enabled them to make a real difference, one child at a time.

They talk about the children consumed by anger or alienation who they reached with kindness and care and whose life was turned around as a result, and the student who discovered in music something they could do well and take pride in, and another whose interest in science was kindled by field trips that departed from the official curriculum and included material not on the test but which enabled the student to see the wonder of science all around her and who went on to win the county science fair and another who sat silent in class and never turned in any homework until the teacher was able to unwind the nature of the problem in a horribly abusive family situation and get social services to rescue the student.

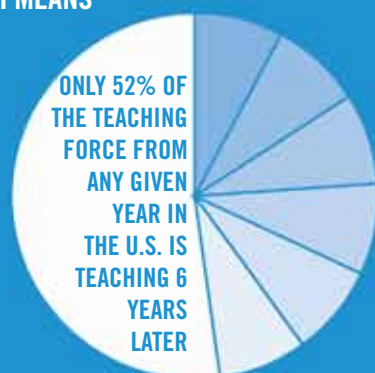
These teachers understand the crucial importance of enabling their students to use English and mathematics well. But they also speak eloquently of spending a professional lifetime seeing their students not as vessels to fill with vocabulary, grammar, diction

# THE HALF-LIFE OF A TEACHING FORCE

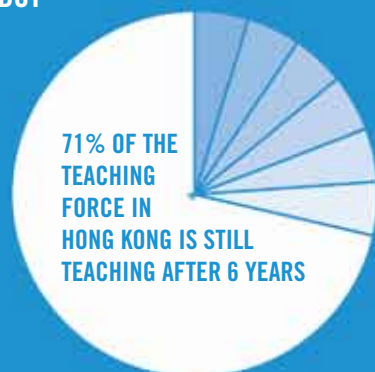


EVERY YEAR ROUGHLY 8% OF U.S. TEACHERS LEAVE THE PROFESSION, COMPARED TO 4.8% IN HONG KONG AND 3% IN SINGAPORE

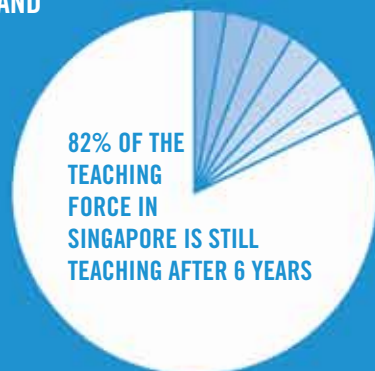
WHICH MEANS



BUT



AND



SOURCE: NCES Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) 2012-2013, Hong Kong Bureau of Education, Singapore Ministry of Education.

## V. THE FAILURE OF TEST-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

and mathematical algorithms, but as people whose potential will forever remain locked inside themselves until they can believe in themselves and their possibilities, people for whom their relationships to other people loom far larger than their obligations to turn in their homework, people whose curiosity and eagerness to prove themselves against the challenges of growing into adults are much more important than their score on a test, people for whom math has neither meaning nor interest until they can see why it works and what can be done with it.

These are teachers whose entire professional life has been marked by pride in their work and their ability to use their accumulating professional experience to make large differences in the lives of their students. But they cannot take it anymore. It makes no sense at all to them to measure all their accomplishments by student scores on tests of low-level English and mathematics literacy when they want them to understand where political liberty came from and what it takes to sustain it. Reducing everything they have tried to do for their students to scores on low-level tests of two subjects makes a mockery of their work. Using the scores from this very narrow slice of student accomplishment to mark their school with an A or B or C or, worst of all, a D lumps together the school just beginning to turn around under a brilliant new leader with the school on the other side of town that has been sliding downhill under listless leadership for years. It brands the outstanding teacher in that school with the same iron that should be applied to the principal who has failed to lead.

They describe what they are experiencing as a process in which, piece by piece, they are being told what to do and how to do it by people who are not teachers and have little respect for teachers or the work that teachers do. They see policymakers embracing one nostrum after another that their own professional experience tells them will not work. They know that the real motivation behind the vogue for teacher evaluation is to fire teachers who are deemed to add insufficient value to a student's education, but they think that tests used for that purpose measure very little of what they think a good education is and even less of what a good teacher does for the students under his or her care.<sup>27</sup>

Imagine what a good doctor would think if he or she were told that the problems in our healthcare system would be solved if only doctors were publicly branded with an A, B

all these punitive actions being taken against doctors, if they saw that, increasingly, doctors had less and less control over their work and young doctors were not making enough money to support a family? What do you suppose doctors would think if hospital administrators got together and decided that the answer to the country's healthcare problems was to use a 49-page evaluation rubric to evaluate all the doctors admitted to practice at that hospital?

Test-based accountability and teacher evaluation systems are not neutral in their effect. It is not simply that they fail to improve student performance. Their pernicious effect is to create an environment that could not be better calculated to drive the best practitioners out of teaching and to prevent the most promising young people from entering it. If we want broad improvement in student performance and we

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**Suppose all the talk of improving health care came down to getting rid of bad doctors, but the government was doing almost nothing to improve the quality of new doctors.**

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or C grade by some external authority using only numbers generated by computers based only on two absurdly limited dimensions of healthcare outcomes. Suppose all the talk of improving health care came down to getting rid of bad doctors, but the government was doing almost nothing to improve the quality of new doctors. What do you think young people at the top of their high school graduating classes would think of the medical profession as an option if they saw

want to close the gap between disadvantaged students and the majority of our students, then we will abandon test-based accountability and teacher evaluation as key drivers of our education reform program.

But no one, certainly not me, would argue that we should not hold our professional educators accountable for their performance. The question is, what would accountability look like if we actually regarded our teachers



as professionals doing professional work, instead of interchangeable blue-collar workers doing blue-collar work? What form would accountability take in systems in which teachers were recruited, compensated, educated, trained, inducted and managed as true professionals? In systems in which unions were designed to support professionals, not blue-collar workers? In systems in which the work was organized as professional work, not blue-collar work? Fortunately, we have only to look at nations that have successfully redesigned their whole systems for high performance to see what a sensible accountability system looks like in the context of such systems, but, before we look in that direction, it is necessary to take a quick look at the evolution of modern management theory to understand why the top performing countries have designed their new systems in the way they have.

## VI. ACCOUNTABILITY AND MOTIVATION

In our market economy, market forces punish the lazy, incompetent and inefficient by putting them out of business. But public education is a monopoly, so we need other ways of ensuring that the people delivering the service have strong incentives to work hard and deliver high quality at a reasonable cost.

Before we start thinking about how to design more effective accountability systems, it

might make some sense to think about the premises that underlie different approaches to accountability system design.

The accountability system incorporated in No Child Left Behind was, in the first instance, based on a very simple premise, couched as an ultimatum to the schools and professional educators: If you want to continue to get federal funds for disadvantaged students, you will have to show they are making adequate progress in their education. If you can't do that, or are unwilling to do that, you will have to step aside. In the most extreme cases, you will be fired. If that is unacceptable, you will lose your federal funds.

The unstated premise here is that the educators knew what to do but were not doing it, that they were too lazy or incompetent to do it. The draconian measures in the legislation were presumably designed to make the consequences of not performing (we are speaking here of the educators, not the students) so uncomfortable that the educators would be motivated to do what they needed to do to make the students learn, even if that disturbed their comfortable arrangements and routines. This was a policy born of anger at a profession that appeared to the legislators to face no consequences at all when the students failed to learn and who expected to be given more and more money to educate those students after years of taking that money with no visible result.

On the Republican side, there was a feeling among many that they were looking at a public monopoly that was doing what public monopolies do: taking the public's money and then using their monopoly position to deliver substandard services inefficiently at high and rising cost. On the Democratic side, there was a feeling of having been betrayed by their own allies into siding with the teachers at the expense of the very public who had voted them into office.

their teachers and to base that evaluation to a significant degree on calculations of the value added by individual teachers to the achievement of their students. It was clear in the context that the administration expected the states to offer plans that would use these value-added methods of teacher evaluation as an important input into a process that the state would use to identify and fire their worst teachers.

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**Policymakers have placed their bet on teacher evaluation, not to identify the needs of teachers for development, but to identify teachers who need to be dismissed from the service.**

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When the Obama administration came into office, the ground shifted. The overall design of the No Child Left Behind legislation had been discredited. Some states were on a path to having all their schools declared to be failing under the terms of the law. Everyone understood by then that, among the law's fatal flaws, it contained strong incentives for states to lower their student achievement standards rather than raise them. But Congress could not agree on a fix for these and other problems. So the Obama administration stepped into the breach, using a feature of the law never intended for this purpose to grant waivers from the law's punitive provisions if the states applying for those waivers would agree to certain requirements posed by the Obama administration. Prominent among those features was one asking the states to include in their reform plans a plan for evaluating

This was a momentous shift in public policy, from a clear focus on school accountability based on "adequate yearly progress" toward a fixed standard at a fixed time, to a very tough-minded version of test-based teacher accountability.

I can easily understand how emotionally satisfying it must have been for policymakers responsible for No Child Left Behind to stick it to an education establishment that appeared to have taken federal funds for years without perceptible result, and it is just as easy to see how emotionally satisfying it must have been for the Obama administration a few years later to stick it to the worst of our teachers—people they must have perceived as having burnt out years earlier, just putting in their time, waiting for the day when they could make maximum retirement so they could walk out the door.



What these accountability schemes have in common is their unstated presumption that our schools would be functioning at much higher levels if the nation could only find ways to provide stiff penalties for non-performing schools and teachers, identify the non-performers and, if threats do not make them perform, get rid of them, by closing down the schools and firing the teachers.

They threaten poor performing schools with public shaming, takeover and closure and poor performing individuals with public shaming and the loss of their jobs and livelihood. The introduction of these policies was not accompanied by policies designed to improve the supply of highly qualified new teachers by making teaching a more attractive option for our most successful high school students—a key component of policy in the top performing countries. There is a lot of federal money available for training and professional development for teachers but no systematic federal strategy that I can discern for turning that money into systems of the kind top performing countries use to support long-term, steady improvements in teachers' professional practice. I conclude that policymakers have placed their bet on teacher evaluation, not to identify the needs of teachers for development, but to identify teachers who need to be dismissed from the service. And, further, that the way to motivate school staff to work harder and more efficiently is to threaten them with public shame and the loss of their job.

In the 1960s, Douglas McGregor, a professor of management at MIT, posited two assumptions that managers could make about their workers. Under McGregor's Theory X, managers could assume that workers are naturally lazy and will avoid work whenever possible unless they are supervised closely, told just what to do and offered explicit monetary incentives to do it. Under McGregor's Theory Y, alternatively, managers could assume that most workers are naturally self-motivated and ambitious, want to take pride in their work and are capable of coming up with creative solutions to the problems they face on their own. McGregor said that managers who embraced Theory Y would get much more out of their workers than those who embraced Theory X, especially if they acted on their theory by supporting and developing their workers.<sup>28</sup>

In 1979, Peter Drucker, in *The Age of Discontinuity*, posited that the future belonged to companies and countries employing knowledge workers doing knowledge work. He meant that companies and countries would succeed if they abandoned the mass production model in favor of a model based on the value that could be added by highly educated and trained staff. But that highly educated and trained staff, he said, could not be managed like the blue-collar workers of the mass production age were managed. Knowledge workers would fail unless they were managed like professionals: given a lot of autonomy,

trusted to make the right decisions and supported rather than directed.<sup>29</sup>

More recently, Dan Pink, in the best-selling book, *Drive*, sums up a lot of recent business school research by saying that the carrot and stick methods that were used to drive American workers a century ago won't work anymore. Today's modern economy requires another approach, one based on autonomy of the worker, the desire of that worker for opportunities to really master his or her craft or profession and the need of modern workers for a sense of purpose and meaning in the work itself. In short, Pink draws on four decades of research to argue that most workers are capable of much more and better work than they currently do, but they will be motivated to do it not by the old extrinsic rewards and punishments, but rather by the intrinsic motivation that comes from being treated like the true professionals described by Drucker.<sup>30</sup>

From my perspective, the line of logic that runs from McGregor through Drucker to Pink applies with special force to American teachers. The people who have embraced test-based accountability systems and value-added teacher evaluation are deeply invested in Theory X and in the methods of management that Theory X leads to. That is a road to the past, not the future. The next section looks at how the top performing countries are building on the work of McGregor, Drucker and Pink.

## VII. ACCOUNTABILITY: WHAT THE TOP PERFORMERS DO

First, the high stakes tests in the top performing countries are used to hold students, not teachers, accountable, the obverse of what happens in the United States. These nations typically have qualifications systems, which means that there is no high school diploma. Instead, when they leave school, students get a card which shows what courses they have taken and their grades. Of course, our transcripts purport to do this, but because neither the course content nor the grades are standardized, neither employers nor college admissions officers know what our transcripts really mean in terms of student accomplishment. In the top performing countries, they are standardized. Students know what courses they need to take and what grades they need to get in order to go to the university they have chosen or begin their vocational training program to embark on their chosen career. Because students know exactly what they have to do to move to the next stage of their education or training to get where they want to go, they are highly motivated to take tough courses and work hard in school. In Finland, the only high stakes exams are those given at the end of high school to students who want to go to university.<sup>31</sup> In many countries the high stakes exams are given at the end of middle school and at the end of the lower division of high school, and then at the end

of high school (what many countries call upper secondary school). In some countries, high stakes exams are given only twice in a student's career in school.<sup>32</sup>

In most of these countries, the primary form of accountability for the school and its staff is high profile publication of the average scores for the exams for each school, often front page news. Sometimes the scores for specific minority groups are also published. In

tests or examinations cover the whole core curriculum, not just mathematics, the native language and science, so the school has no incentive to slight the other subjects in the school curriculum, as is the case in the United States.

Many top performing countries with the kind of system just described use the data from their census testing and their sampling procedures to identify low performing

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**High stakes tests in the top performing countries are used to hold students, not teachers, accountable, the obverse of what happens in the United States.**

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Australia, there is a national web site, called MySchool,<sup>33</sup> on which a lot of school data for each school are published and available in easy-to-read form by anyone in the nation. This includes, but is not limited to, average student performance data broken down by socio-economic background, race and native language.

Thus far, we have been talking about what is called census testing, that is, testing systems intended to produce data for every single student. But, because these countries rarely test every student more than three times in a student's career in school, some of these countries also do sample testing in other grades. This does not produce data for each student or for each teacher, so it cannot be used to hold teachers accountable, but it does produce data for each school and that data, in addition to the data from the census tests, is made public, as just described. In most of these countries, the

schools, another form of accountability. But they do not use the data to publicly label schools with a letter grade. Instead, they use the data to decide which schools will receive visits from teams of expert school inspectors. These inspectors are highly regarded educators.<sup>34</sup> The school is required to pull together a lot of data, which is made available to the inspection team in advance. The team then conducts a two- to three-day visit, which is very thorough and involves a lot of classroom observations and interviews with teachers, administrators, parents and students. When the visit is over, the team issues a report with recommendations, which is typically made available to the whole school community, including the parents. Assistance is then provided by the authorities to the school to enable the faculty to implement the recommendations. The process is then repeated after an appropriate interval and appropriate steps

taken, depending on what is found. The object of the game is not to shame anyone, but to establish the facts and then to help the school build the capacity to address the issues revealed by the initial inspection. It is very important to point out that the data from the initial testing tells the government that there is a problem, but it does not tell the government what the problems actually are. It takes an extended visit by experts to do that. This process is managed by

teaching, in which accountability runs up to the supervisor, to a professional model in which accountability runs horizontally, to one's peers.<sup>35</sup> Consider the modern law firm or architectural firm or engineering firm. People in these firms depend on one another to get the job done. If a member of the firm is not pulling his or her weight, the whole firm and everyone in it suffers. It is in the interests of each to improve the skills of all. It is incumbent on each to ask that person

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**In the top performing countries, teachers have extensive career ladders, designed so that those teachers who are judged to be superior performers climb the ladder of responsibility and authority, earning more money as they go up that ladder.**

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the ministry, but the inspectors are usually drawn from a list of highly regarded current and retired teachers, principals, other school administrators and researchers and analysts who are not employed by the ministry. In some countries with systems of this sort, the inspectors have the authority to close the school if a school is unable or unwilling to implement the recommendations made by the inspectors after a reasonable period. That threat is acted on very rarely. But the fact that the inspectors have this authority and have been known to use it is enough to make the schools quite responsive to the inspector's recommendations.

But the most important feature of accountability systems in the top performing countries is very telling. These countries are moving from management systems based on a blue-collar, supervisory model of

to leave if that person fails to pull his or her weight after getting assistance. Because everyone is working closely with the others all the time, there is no place for slackers or the incompetent to hide. The judgments are made by professional colleagues who know exactly what to look for.

These are systems in which the professionals are both workers and managers at the same time, and in which they have a very large measure of professional autonomy as well as professional responsibility. In the top performing countries, teachers have extensive career ladders, designed so that those teachers who are judged to be superior performers climb the ladder of responsibility and authority, earning more money as they go up that ladder. This, in many ways, is the essence of what it means to be a professional. As Peter Drucker put

it, the blue-collar worker expects a fair day's pay for a fair day's work; the knowledge worker expects an extraordinary day's pay for an extraordinary day's work. Professionals want very much to have an opportunity to distinguish themselves and to earn the recognition, compensation, authority and responsibility that comes with distinguished performance.<sup>36</sup>

The obvious conclusion from this line of reasoning is that teachers ought to be able to band together in professional partnerships and offer their services either to school systems to run schools or directly to parents, much as doctors, attorneys and architects form professional partnerships to offer their services to their clients. That proposal was first made by Ruth Anne Olson in the 1980s and championed since then by Ted Kolderie, who has lent his support to a small but growing network of such schools. But the idea that the nation would get much better schools if it were willing to treat its teachers as professionals does not require us to convert our schools to privately owned partnerships. Kolderie has shown us how regular public schools can be run by teachers.<sup>37</sup> And many countries have shown us how schools whose staff report to a central public school district administration can have faculties composed of people who are treated as professionals in every respect.

I hear you now say, sure, that's all fine, but what about the lousy teachers? How do you hold them accountable? How do you

get rid of them? Systems of the kind I just described do not work unless the general quality of the members of the profession is very high and there are clear and demanding norms of professional practice that define the culture in the organizations that employ the professionals. And you might well say that that is some sort of fairy tale, a description of a utopia that will never exist. But it is no utopia. It is indeed the situation in the countries with the highest performing education systems. They have a surplus of excellent teachers, and much less school-to-school variation and within-school variation in outcomes than in the United States. They are getting excellence and equity.<sup>38</sup> If our approach to accountability worked, we would be leading the world's league tables. But we aren't. They are.

It is at this very point that we join a very important conundrum. I have here advocated using high stakes testing systems to hold students accountable for their performance. But how can we do that when we know that the opportunity to learn is not even close to being equally distributed? How can we hold all students accountable for reaching high standards when some are in very effective schools and others are not?

It is tempting to say that students should not be held accountable for their performance until all students have an equal opportunity to learn. It is just as tempting to say that it is not fair to hold their teachers accountable until all their students come to school ready

## VII. ACCOUNTABILITY: WHAT THE TOP PERFORMERS DO

to learn and until the system provides more resources to schools serving hard to educate students than students who are easier to educate.

If we do that, we will hold neither students nor their teachers accountable for many years to come. And that will be a shame, because life will hold the children accountable as they grow up to be adults. Whether or not they or their teachers face high stakes tests in school, these young adults will face tests of their ability relentlessly when they leave high school.

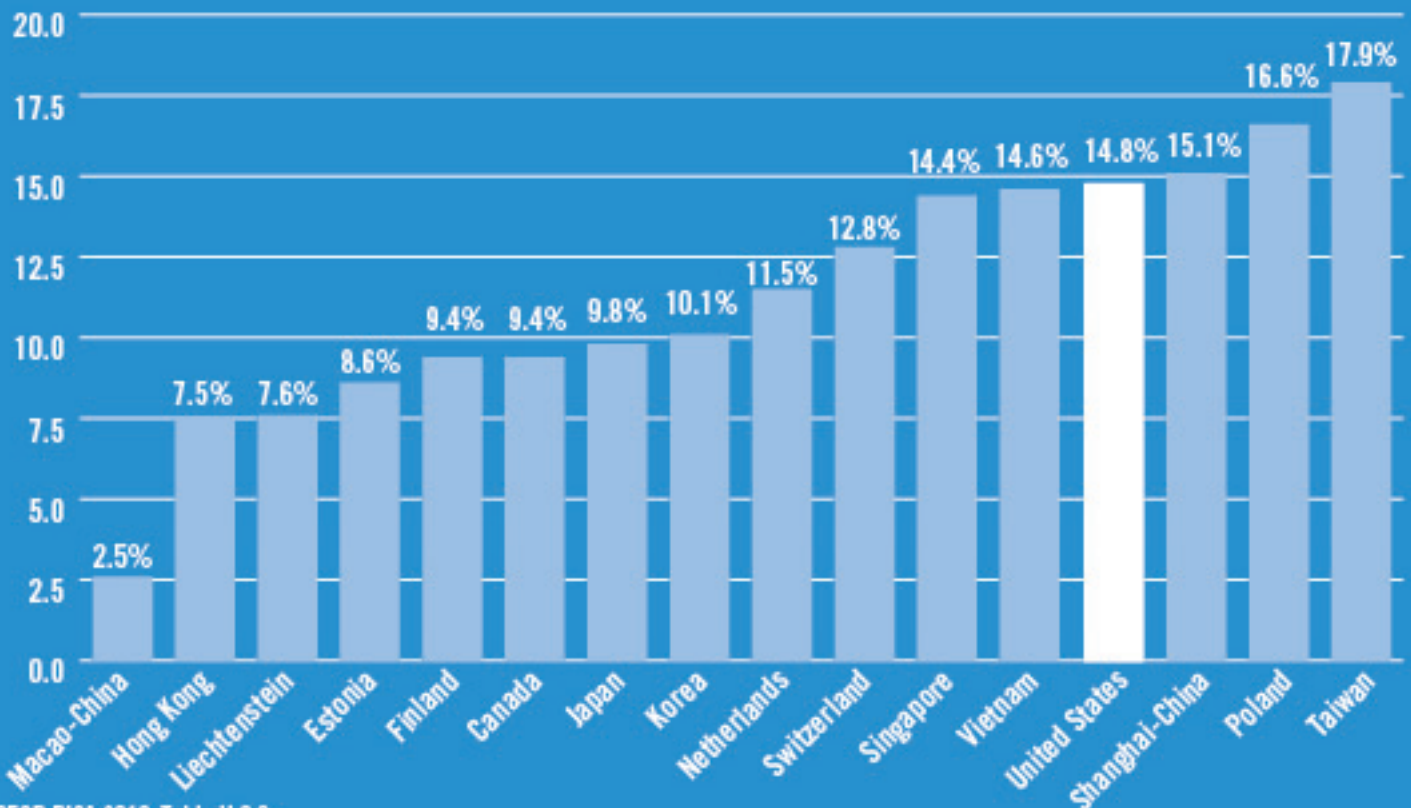
Almost all of the high performing countries have dealt with this issue, not by delaying

high stakes testing until all students have an equal opportunity to learn, but by working very hard to provide more teachers to schools serving hard-to-educate students than they provide to schools serving students who are easier to educate. A few not only do that, but are also working hard to make sure that their best teachers are working in schools serving hard-to-educate students.<sup>39</sup>

OECD data show that socio-economic status is a better predictor of student achievement in the United States than in all but a handful of other countries. In most of the top performers, there is less overall variation in student performance when taking into



### PISA 2012: PERCENTAGE OF VARIATION IN MATH PERFORMANCE EXPLAINED BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS: U.S. COMPARED TO TOP PERFORMING COUNTRIES\*



Source: OECD PISA 2012, Table I1.2.9a

\*This chart compares the U.S. to the top performers. When compared to all OECD countries, the U.S. is at the OECD average.



consideration socioeconomic status than in the United States.<sup>40</sup> These countries did not cease administering high stakes tests until they achieved these outcomes. They used them to help them achieve these outcomes. They used their accountability systems to provide incentives to both students and teachers to improve their performance, and, at the same time, worked hard to improve the fairness of their school finance systems and the way they distributed their teachers.

## VIII. ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE MODERN TEACHERS' UNION

This model of accountability is, of course, a very different approach to holding teachers accountable for the quality of their work than the approach now dominant in the United States. It is based on professional—as opposed to blue-collar—models of organization and management.

But how can we move to a professional model of teaching when we have unions that are based on a blue-collar model of teaching? Aren't the unions the single biggest obstacle standing in the way of organizing teachers as a true profession?

Before we get into these questions in earnest we need to get some facts on the table. First, there is no correlation between the strength of unions and student performance. In the United States, the states with the strongest student performance are often the ones

with the strongest unions.<sup>41</sup> Globally, we find that some of the countries with the best student performance have some of the world's strongest teachers' unions.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence to support the case that strong teachers' unions are, per se, among the most important obstacles to high student performance, in the United States or elsewhere.

But that said, there is a problem, and it is a big problem. This paper is about accountability. When districts are not performing for their students we want to be able to hold the district accountable. Likewise schools. But when we look under the rug, what we often see is that the union contract makes that impossible. In many cases, it is the union that controls which teachers can work in which schools, which teachers are appointed to leadership roles in the schools, which teachers can be fired for nonperformance of their duties, how the schools will be organized, how the time in the school day will be used, and much more. In many districts, school councils dominated by teachers picked by the union play key roles in selecting principals, determining the way the school budget will be used and what the curriculum will be. In these circumstances, it is unreasonable to hold management accountable for the performance of the students, because management has given up control over many of the factors that account for differences in student achievement that are potentially

within the control of the school. But there is no mechanism for holding the union accountable for these decisions. So, for all practical purposes, no one is in charge, and there is no accountability for results.

How did this happen? Two factors account for this.<sup>43</sup> The first one is American labor

breaks and how long they lasted. But, in the schools, they related to the factors I described above, and, after decades of this practice had gone by, the school boards discovered they had given the store away. The public and policymakers were furious with the teachers; they should have been furious with the boards.

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**When districts are not performing for their students we want to be able to hold the district accountable. Likewise schools. But when we look under the rug, what we often see is that the union contract makes that impossible.**

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law. Under the Taft-Hartley Act, the law not only assumes that all the important decisions will be made by management, but it actually requires labor to conduct itself as an adversary of management. The law reflects the realities of industrial organization prior to World War II. It long ago ceased to reflect the realities of modern industrial organization as redefined by people like Douglas McGregor, Peter Drucker and Daniel Pink.

The second factor is the way collective bargaining evolved in the field of education after Albert Shanker created the modern labor movement for public education. Year after year, school boards, unable or unwilling to raise the money required to fund adequate teachers salaries, and scared of causing strikes that would lose them their seats on school boards, instead offered teachers concessions related to “working conditions.” In the factory these included working conditions related to how often one got bathroom

There can be no doubt but what the unions made great gains for their members in the 70s and 80s. But, beginning in the 90s, they were fighting a losing battle to retain what they had won earlier. They were losing that battle because the public and policymakers were increasingly holding them responsible for the high cost and poor performance of the schools. They have two choices. They can remain in a defensive crouch and continue fighting to retain what they won earlier, until everything they have won is gone (note for example, the recent effort to pass a California initiative to abolish teacher tenure in that state<sup>44</sup>). Or they can ditch their defensive posture and, instead of defending archaic and counterproductive practices in the schools, practices perceived to benefit the teachers but not their students, take the leadership in raising the quality of teachers to much higher standards and championing the measures needed to turn teaching into a true profession.



They have nothing to lose and everything to gain by doing that. The high status professions long ago championed very high standards for entering their professions because they understood that by raising standards, they would choke off supply, and with a much smaller supply, they could charge much more for their services. It would not cost the country any more to do that, because the very costly attrition rates for teachers would fall dramatically as quality rises.<sup>45</sup> Much higher quality teachers would produce much better performing students, which would enhance the status of teachers and make it even easier to raise their compensation. With rising student performance, the public would trust teachers more and would be much more likely to give teachers the kind of professional autonomy that professionals in high status fields have always had. I am not guessing at this. This is exactly what has happened in the top performing countries.

Because teachers are public employees, there would still be a need for teachers' unions, but they would be bargaining at the state level, with the legislature and the governor. And they would be doing that, not as representatives of blue-collar labor, but as the representatives of an admired and respected profession. Management would get their prerogatives back and would be held accountable for results, but the professionals, granted far more autonomy, would be also holding each other accountable for

the quality of their work, as professionals everywhere do.

To this point, I have explained how the United States got the education accountability system we have, pointed out that there is no evidence that it has worked, wondered whether it might have resulted in poorer student performance than if it had never been instituted at all, explained why it is grossly unfair in placing blame for school failure on the teachers when that failure is manifestly the result of overall public policy (in which we are all implicated), offered another model of accountability which is based on a professional model of management long since adopted by modern business organizations and by the countries with the best records worldwide in education achievement, and, finally, suggested that, for that model to work in the United States, our teachers' unions will have to adopt a new model for their role in American education.

With all of this as background, it is time now to present a new proposal for an American approach to the design of an education accountability system. It is focused on the role of the state in the design and implementation of such a system. When that is done, I will explain the choices I have made and then, in closing, discuss the implications of this model of accountability for the federal role in education.



# A NEW DESIGN FOR A STATE ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

## DEVELOP A STATE CURRICULUM FOR THE WHOLE CORE

The state would start by deciding on a core high school curriculum, not just mathematics and English, but also the other subjects that all students should take to graduate from high school. My personal picks would be English, mathematics (including at a minimum, mathematical modeling, algebra, statistics, probability and geometry), science (physics, chemistry, biology and environmental science), American history, world history, economics, music, the arts, technology and engineering and physical fitness, but this hypothetical state might make other choices.

The state would create a high school curriculum for each of these subjects—based on the Common Core State Standards in the relevant subjects—designed to match the rigor of the curriculum in the nations with the highest performance in international comparative tests, a curriculum designed—where appropriate—to enable students to master the concepts and core ideas in each subject and, as well, to be able to apply what they are learning to real world problems. The curriculum should be designed to enable students to acquire the non-subject-related

skills as well as the more familiar subject-related skills that all students will need to be successful. That list is now familiar, and it includes, but is not limited to, problem-solving, persistence, creativity, innovative capacity, strong analytical skills, the ability to synthesize, strong communications skills, the ability to contribute effectively in groups and the ability to lead when necessary, and so on. Then the state should map that curriculum down to grade one in a way that describes the content of the progression in the curriculum from the beginning to the end of the sequence, using what we now know about children's growth and development to map a sequence that tracks what we have learned about how young people learn.

## ADOPT VERY HIGH QUALITY TESTS, KEYED TO THAT CURRICULUM, TO BE ADMINISTERED TO ALL STUDENTS AT NO MORE THAN THREE POINTS IN A STUDENT'S CAREER IN SCHOOL

Then the state should pick no more than three key points on the trajectory from grade one to the end of high school, and for each of those points, develop very high quality assessments designed to capture as much as possible the full range of knowledge, skill and the other qualities we want to see in

our students in each of these subjects or their precursors and across them at each of these points in a student's trajectory through school. If I were choosing those three points, they would be the end of fourth grade (because that is the point by which students should be able to decode the works on the printed page and have some comprehension of their meaning), the end of middle school (because they should by then be ready for high school, and, if they are not, the schools should have a strategy for getting them ready), and the end of the sophomore year in high school (because they should be at least ready to begin a community college program by then, and if they are not, two years remain in which that can be fixed). The test administered at the end of the sophomore year in high school would be designed to measure what all students were expected to learn in order to graduate from high school, and its standard would be set on the basis of what it would take to be successful in the first year of an open-admissions college or a vocational program designed to meet an industry standard. That is, the last exams would be set at an empirically determined college- and work-ready standard. Students could take these exams as early as the end of their sophomore year or whenever thereafter they wished and could leave high school to go to college as soon as they passed it, or they could stay in high school to prepare for selective colleges if they wished. All high schools would be tasked with getting all of their students to this college-ready standard.

These census tests would include some multiple-choice questions, but would largely consist of performance items, many of which would require the production of such things as extended essays, working robots, works of art and so on, which could not be assessed with multiple-choice methods. These performance assessments would be designed to assess both the kinds of skills traditionally associated with the academic disciplines and the skills that are variously named as 21st century skills, key skills, cross-cutting skills and so on. Some of these things could be captured using computers; others would require human judgment. For the most part, these assessments would be expensive and time-consuming to develop and administer, and they should be.

### **ADOPT CHEAPER, MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS AND ADMINISTER THEM, ON A SAMPLING BASIS, TO STUDENTS EVERY OTHER YEAR, SKIPPING THOSE YEARS IN WHICH THE HIGH QUALITY TESTS ARE ADMINISTERED**

In every other off year, the state would administer tests in English and mathematics beginning in grade 2, and, starting in middle school, in science too, on a sampling basis. Vulnerable groups would be oversampled to make sure that populations of such students in the schools would be accurately measured.

The sampling assessments would be designed to capture the performance of schools, but not individual students, and would be

# Proposed Testing Timeline



## 1st Grade Diagnostic Test

This initial diagnostic exam at the beginning of first grade would be used to determine students' readiness for elementary school.

## 2nd Grade Sampling Test

These tests would be administered to a random sample of students, with an oversampling of vulnerable students. They would cover English and mathematics at the end of 2nd grade and add science as well at the end of 6th grade. These tests would be administered and graded by a computer and therefore less expensive and time-consuming than the census tests.

## 4th Grade Census Test

All students would take these very high-quality assessments which would cover the whole curriculum and assess 21st century skills. The census tests would have some multiple-choice responses but would largely consist of performance items.

## 6th Grade Sampling Test

## 8th Grade Census Test

## 10th Grade+ Census Test

This test would be designed to measure college and career-readiness. Students could elect to take these very high-quality exams as early as the end of their sophomore year and if they passed, would have several options available to them including graduating early and enrolling in college or a vocational program, staying in high school and preparing for admissions into a selective college or entering the workforce.



designed so that all of the assessment could be administered and graded entirely by computers, thus producing assessments that would be much less expensive to administer. In addition, all elementary schools would be required to administer a state-determined diagnostic test of entering first graders' math and English literacy skills.

### **CREATE A PUBLIC STATE WEB SITE CONTAINING A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE OF EACH SCHOOL**

The state would create a public web site on which would be posted the relevant results of the sampling tests, the first grade diagnostic test and the three in-depth tests, for each subject and grade tested in every public school in the state and for each group within the school, but not for each student. It would also compare the average scores to the average scores for the state and for schools serving similar student bodies. The system would not be designed to compare the performance of individual teachers to the performance of other teachers within the school or outside the school.

### **USE THE DATA TO IDENTIFY SCHOOLS THAT MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE, SEND EXPERTS TO INVESTIGATE AND PROPOSE IMPROVEMENT MEASURES TO BE TAKEN BY THE SCHOOLS**

The state would take responsibility for using the data generated by this system to

identify schools whose students appeared to be in danger of falling significantly behind the expected progressions through the state curriculum, and schools in which vulnerable groups of children were falling significantly behind. Schools thus identified would be scheduled for visits by teams of experts trained and assembled for this purpose by the state. The expert teams would be charged with identifying the problems in the school and with producing recommendations for improving school performance through actions to be carried out by the school faculty, the school district, the community and state assistance teams. The expert teams would be assembled by the state education agency, but would be composed mainly of highly admired currently serving and retired teachers, school administrators and researchers.

### **HELP SCHOOLS IN TROUBLE TO BUILD THE CAPACITY THEY NEED TO IMPROVE; TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES IF THE SCHOOLS DO NOT IMPROVE**

The state would, of course, have to build the capacity needed to provide the assistance required by schools that have been inspected and found to be in need of assistance. In many cases, it would have to be prepared to provide extensive training for weak principals and teachers, as well as the technical assistance needed by the school to improve curriculum, instruction, school organization, management and so on.

If the recommended actions did not produce the desired effects in a reasonable time, the state would require large districts to do one or more of the following:

1. Ask high performing school principals to take responsibility for the low performing school, in addition to running their own school;
2. Deploy a cadre of high performing teachers to the low performing school to act as master teachers in that school;
3. Deploy a cadre of teachers from the low performing school to a high performing school for training and mentoring;
4. Significantly raise the ratio of teachers to students in the school, salting the faculty with high performing teachers; and
5. Reassign a high performing principal to the low performing school.

### CREATE INCENTIVES FOR GREAT TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS TO HELP LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Implementing systems of this sort implies that districts and states have the power to redeploy teachers and administrators in the manner described. The best such systems in the top performing countries do not require teachers and principals to serve where the government requires them to serve, but provides strong incentives for them to do so by limiting the opportunity to progress up their career ladder systems to teachers who

have served in schools serving disadvantaged students. Career ladders are an essential component of systems designed to attract and retain high quality teachers in the top performing countries. Though they are not, per se, part of their accountability systems, their accountability systems depend on the incentives provided by the structure of their career ladder systems to make sure that high quality teachers and school leaders are available in the numbers needed by their low performing schools to turn them around, and, as we have seen, the system for identifying low performing schools is a part of their accountability system.

The plan just described, of course, would not work in sparsely populated rural areas. For those areas, the state would have to maintain a register of highly competent teachers and school leaders who would be available to serve as mentors to leaders and teachers in rural schools and to be stationed in those schools for various lengths of time, as needed. And the state would have to be able and willing to enlarge the faculties of rural schools serving hard-to-educate students with fully competent teachers on a long-term basis.

To make the state accountability plan described in this paper work, the state will need to develop policies intended to transition its schools from blue-collar models of work organization to professional models of work organization.

## REQUIRE DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS TO ADOPT A PROFESSIONAL MODEL OF COMPENSATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

All districts in the state would be required to implement a multi-step career ladder system culminating in the position of master teacher and another multi-step career ladder culminating in the position of master principal. Each step up the ladder would come with considerable additional compensation, responsibility and autonomy. The designations of “master teacher” and “master principal” would have the meanings determined by the state and would refer to people who had won those titles on the basis of meeting known and demanding criteria for each step on the ladder.

Not less than a quarter of the time during which a teacher is expected to be available for work at the school would be spent with other teachers, not with students, engaged in the collaborative development of more effective curriculum, instructional methods and lessons. Time would be available for teachers to meet weekly by grade and by subject for this purpose and to collaborate with one another on the analysis of the challenges faced by individual students, with a view to combining their individual perspectives to come up with plans for those students that will enable them to achieve demanding standards. All teachers except the master teachers will have mentor teachers who will

be responsible for coaching them to higher levels of expertise. All teachers at the upper levels of the career ladder will be responsible for leading the curriculum and instruction improvement work and for providing extensive mentoring to new teachers. They will also be responsible for working with the principal to determine which candidate teachers will be recommended for full licensure, which serving teachers will be recommended for special assistance, and which teachers previously recommended for special assistance will be recommended for counseling out of the profession.

As we have seen, teachers would not be able to move up either the teacher or administrator career ladder unless they had offered their services to the district or state to serve in a low performing school, probably in an inner-city or rural setting, for some years earlier in their career. This requirement would both provide a steady supply of capable people willing to serve in schools serving a disproportionate number of hard-to-educate students and would provide these exceptional educators an experience that would serve them well later in their careers.

In schools in which a system of this sort has taken hold, one can feel the sense of ownership of the school by the faculty. Morale is high and so is commitment. Teachers do not ask for extra pay to stay after school to do what needs to be done. They do not look askance at the teacher who goes the extra mile. Extra effort, both in



# TREATING TEACHERS LIKE PROFESSIONALS

## 1. Develop Career Ladders for Teachers and School Leaders

Career ladders are an essential component of education systems designed to attract and retain high-quality teachers. Each step up the ladder should come with considerable additional compensation, responsibility and autonomy.



## 2. Increase Compensation to Attract Top Talent

Attracting top talent at the entry level requires compensation on par with other entry level professionals. In the United States, the average starting salary for a classroom teacher is much less than that of other college graduates like nurses and accountants, and far less than the starting salaries of computer programmers and engineers.\*





### 3. Change How Teachers' Time Is Spent

At least 25 percent of teachers' time in school should be spent working with other teachers on curriculum development, instructional methods and lesson-planning.



U.S. teachers spend 80 percent of their time in front of a class teaching,



Compared to 60 percent for teachers in top performing nations.\*\*



U.S. teachers generally have from 3-5 hours a week for lesson planning.



Teachers in top performing countries spend from 15-20 hours per week working with colleagues on preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, observing other classrooms and meeting with students and parents.\*\*

### 4. Develop Peer-to-Peer Accountability Systems

Teachers who work together hold each other accountable for the good of the team.



\*NACE Salary Survey, September 2013.

<http://careers.washington.edu/sites/default/files/all/editors/docs/2013-september-salary-survey.pdf> (accessed May 16, 2014).

\*\*SCOPE, *How High Achieving Countries Develop Great Teachers*, Page 3

teaching and in learning one's trade, pay off in such a system, in increased status in the community, increased admiration from one's colleagues, higher compensation and more professional autonomy.

Most important, teachers in such organizations are accountable to each other for the quality of their work and there is no place to hide. Everyone knows who the top contributors are and who is not pulling their weight. Teachers get ahead not because they curried favor with the principal, but because they are very good at what they do. That is what a good accountability system should do.

### **GREATLY INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF HIGH QUALITY CANDIDATES FOR OPEN TEACHER POSITIONS**

None of this works unless the state has policies intended to produce a surplus of highly qualified teachers, people who could have chosen the high status professions, but chose teaching instead, people who will not choose teaching as a career unless it offers first-class professional education, the kinds of rewards professionals typically expect for high competence and high dedication, and the kind of work environment in which they and their professional colleagues have a large measure of control over the work and how it gets done.

### **A PROFESSIONAL MODEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

In this system, teachers would continue to be accountable to their supervisors and to the public. A wealth of data would be available to them, their supervisors and the public on the results of their work. Their ability to move ahead in their career, in compensation and in stature both among their colleagues and with the public would depend on their position on the career ladder, and that would in turn depend on their proven competence as a teacher. Their primary accountability would be to their professional colleagues, some of whom would be higher on the career ladder than they. Working closely together, they would be expected to support one another in improving their practice, but, at the same time, to weed out those who failed to improve, just as professional colleagues do in engineering firms, law firms and hospitals. That is how professional systems of accountability work.

## IX. COMMENTARY ON THE PLAN

The plan described above starts with four sets of state tests given to all students during the course of their careers in public school. The first is a diagnostic test of entering first graders, designed to test their readiness for first grade. Children enter the first grade with very different degrees of readiness, even if their native language is English. Their chances of success in elementary school and thereafter are greatly affected by the degree to which the education they receive in the primary grades is geared to their starting point. Strictly speaking, these tests are not an accountability measure, in the usual sense, but in fact could be used to hold the providers of family services and early childhood education accountable for the readiness of young children for schools, and quite apart from that, the system would be a crucial feature of the testing regime,

reading, the second at the end of middle school and the third in high school. These assessments would be designed to capture as much as possible of the cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of the kind of education now widely believed to be needed for a student to go on to a successful life, far more than is now captured in the typical state test. While it is possible to do this, it is expensive. But, by testing all students less often than we now do, we could get much better tests that we could afford. Because what gets tested is what is taught, this is the only way that we can prevent our accountability testing system from narrowing what gets taught to what can be cheaply tested. The plan would embrace the subjects implicated in the idea of what it means to be an educated person. This would prevent the accountability testing system from driving out of the curriculum subjects that almost everyone agrees are very important.

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**Instead of testing all of our students every year with low-level, cheap tests, our students would take high stakes tests only three times in their whole school career.**

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making it possible to construct personalized programs of study for young children designed to get them off to a good start in school, no matter what kind of experience they have had prior to their arrival.

The first grade diagnostic test would be followed by three more tests of every student during their career in the public schools, the first at the end of the primary grades, when they should have mastered the essentials of

The elementary and middle school tests would be designed for specific grades. High school would be different. The high school test would be designed to assess the degree to which students had mastered the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the first year of a typical community college program, which is the minimum standard for being successful in both work and college, since most vocational education in the United States is offered in our community colleges

and students can transfer to four-year state colleges after two years of the appropriate academic program in community college. High schools would be measured by the degree to which they were able to get all or almost all of their students to that standard. This would be a performance standard, not a time-in-the-seat standard. Some would achieve it as early as the end of their sophomore year, others not until the end of their senior year, but all would achieve it. As soon as they did so, they could go immediately to a community college or stay in high school and take a rigorous college-prep program designed to get them into a selective four-year college. American high schools would cease to be sorting institutions; it would be the end of tracking. All students would have a route to two-year and four-year college programs—whether academic or vocational—and all would leave high school ready to succeed in those programs. Not least important, this new accountability system would be designed to hold students, not just teachers, accountable. All students would have a strong incentive to take tough courses and study hard in order to achieve their dream. One has only to look at high schools in top performing countries to see how powerful this idea can be.

The state would plan backwards from the demands of its final high school courses to create a curriculum framework spelling out the progression of topics and competencies students could be expected to study, grade-

by-grade, based on what is now known about how students actually develop through the years, subject by subject.

In between the tests of all students would be tests of only mathematics and English competency every second year. The student population of each school would be sampled. Designated vulnerable groups of students would be oversampled to make sure their performance was accurately portrayed for each school. These tests would be used to help state authorities identify schools that needed a closer look from a team of experts, who would pay an extended visit to the school to understand why it was underperforming and help the school and its community to develop a plan for turning the school around.

That plan would very likely include a strategy for strengthening school performance by pairing the school with a high performing school, transferring some of the staff to a high performing school, transferring some staff from a high performing school to the school in need or a similar strategy. Large districts would be expected to make these arrangements using their own teaching resources. The state would make them for smaller districts. In all cases, the state would recognize an obligation to provide more and better teachers to schools serving the hardest-to-educate students than the easier-to-educate students.

Many readers will by now have observed the absence from this plan of a form of assessment that many—including me—now view as essential in any overall assessment program. I am referring to formative assessment, what I think of as assessment to support instruction.

I am in complete agreement with Linda Darling-Hammond, Dylan Wiliam, Jim Pellegrino, Scott Marion and others that this kind of assessment is essential to the improvement of instruction. Indeed, formative assessment is the most important kind of assessment used in schools, in that it is the means by which teachers gauge the

accountability most common in the high status professions but largely absent in school teaching—accountability to one’s professional colleagues. Adoption of real career ladders in our schools, combined with a regime in which teachers would be expected to work closely with each other—and have the time to do so—would change the culture of the school. The performance of each teacher would be visible to all and the reputation of the school would depend on the actions of all the teachers, creating a large incentive for the best teachers to deal with the weakest teachers. This is the best accountability system of all.

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**The United States will have to provide more resources for schools serving the hardest-to-educate students than for schools serving the easiest-to-educate students.**

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degree to which students are learning what they are teaching. It is therefore the key to a teacher’s ability to adjust his or her teaching in real time to make sure that all students in the classroom understand the material before that teacher moves on. But, vital as it is, we in the United States do not define it as part of the accountability system. Important as it is, the purpose of formative evaluation is not to support accountability, but to support instruction, and thus it does not belong in this plan.

One of the most powerful changes to the prevailing accountability system should be the introduction of the kind of

The accountability regime proposed in this paper will not itself produce results comparable to those the top performing nations enjoy. For that to happen, the United States will have to provide more resources for schools serving the hardest-to-educate students than for schools serving the easiest-to-educate students. The country will have to recruit its teachers from the top quarter of high school graduates and provide them with a far more rigorous professional education than they have received in the past. Schools will have to do a much better job of providing an environment in which teachers are supported to continuously improve their expertise.



Much more attention will have to be given to the development of powerful instructional systems to match the new standards, curriculum frameworks and assessments. But I have no doubt that this kind of accountability system will work far better than the one described by NCLB as modified by the Race to the Top program and the waivers granted by the U.S. Department of Education.

### X. THE FEDERAL ROLE IN STATE EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Prior to NCLB, the federal government had conceived of its role as providing aid to the states for a variety of purposes and enforcing civil rights law in the schools. There was broad agreement that these roles did not infringe on the delegation of the making of education policy to the states in the U.S. Constitution.

NCLB paid no attention to the unwritten agreements that had restrained the federal role in education prior to its passage. That abrupt departure from more than two centuries of practice had its origins in Congressional frustration, as I explained above. I do not recall any great national debate on the federal role in education (vis-à-vis the state) while NCLB was being debated in the Congress.<sup>46</sup>

But the central feature of NCLB was a federally designed—and very new—

accountability system for the states that reached all the way into the heart of the states' right to determine for themselves how to organize and manage public elementary and secondary education in their state. Once the Congress required schools and districts to show that their disadvantaged students were making adequate yearly progress or face serious consequences—including loss of their jobs—the die was cast.

It seems to me that there are two interests that need to be balanced here. One is the federal government's interest in making sure that the money it gives to schools produces results for the disadvantaged students it is intended to benefit. The other is the state's interest in retaining their constitutional right to develop and implement their own policies in the arena of public elementary and secondary education.

Here's how I would balance the scale. Let's begin by predicating that the United States has a national interest in developing an education system that enables our country to be competitive with the most advanced industrial countries in the world. And I will further predicate that we cannot be fully competitive unless we have an education system that is among the top ten in the world, as measured by the most highly regarded comparative measures of international education system performance. And, finally, I will predicate that the most appropriate of these measures is the PISA assessments, which measure not how well

students do on mastering a curriculum, but how well they use what they have learned to solve real-world problems.

What I am really saying here is that we can no longer say that the failure of any state to educate its students well is a problem only for that state. It is a problem for the United States, for all the states. The states have grown far too interdependent and personal mobility is far too great to pretend that what one state does about education does not matter to the people of the United States.

This is what I would do. Let the Congress decide what level of student performance relative to the performance of the top performing nations is acceptable for the United States. For me, the only acceptable target for the United States is to be among the top ten performers in the world. One would hope that the Congress would not want to settle for American performance that is not among the top ten.

Then stipulate in law that all states will participate in the PISA sample assessments,

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**We can no longer say that the failure of any state to educate its students well is a problem only for that state. It is a problem for the United States, for all the states.**

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If a state or region fails to educate its people well, there will be great costs to other states in lost productivity and competitiveness and increased transfer payment costs. We are in that sense among others, one country. But there are many ways to successfully run a state education system. The idea of the states constituting a laboratory of democracy was a good one.

Some in Congress say that the solution to the current dilemma is simply to return to the old formula in which the federal government provided aid, but the states retain all the control they used to have. That ignores the rationale that led to NCLB. When all the states did their thing, the results were highly varied. When NCLB was implemented, many states set their standards in the basement. That must not happen again.

allowing states to compare their performance to the top nations, provinces and states in the world.<sup>47</sup> Further, let the law stipulate that any state with average student performance equal to that of the top ten nations or even within ten percentage points of the average performance of the top ten could organize and manage its education system in any way it wishes. That would include having its own standards, devising its own accountability system, and creating its own testing regime.

But, if a state were to fall below that standard, the federal government would require that state, as a condition of receiving any federal school aid, to adopt such rules as the federal government, in federal legislation, required it to adopt, with respect to such things as student performance standards, assessments and accountability. This would



not mean that the federal government would necessarily specify what student performance standard would have to be used or which tests or what the accountability system would be, but rather that, as in NCLB and the Race to the Top legislation, the federal government would be in a position to require that certain minimum features would have to be in place as a condition of receiving federal funds until such time as the state rose back up into the ranks of the top performers and once again earned the right to be a free agent in such matters. The federal government would, in any case, reserve the right to intervene in education policy in cases involving the infringement of civil rights.

## **XI. CODA**

I can hear the voices in my ear now. What sort of accountability is this? Is he seriously proposing that inspection and professional norms of accountability to fellow professionals can work where the tough forms embraced in NCLB, Race to the Top and the waivers from the provisions of NCLB have not? Doesn't he understand that the only reason that such soft forms of accountability work in the private sector is that it is the private sector, that private entities can and do go out of business if they cannot make a profit in a very demanding competitive market, that it is the threat of loss of pay and jobs that makes this sort of accountability work in the private sector?

Yes, I understand that. But I am an empiricist. I am influenced by theory but most impressed by evidence. The striking thing about the accountability reforms embodied in NCLB, Race to the Top and the waivers is that they are based on theory. No one could point to any education system in which such reforms had been adopted at scale and had produced significant gains in student performance, either for vulnerable groups or for the student population as a whole.

Some will at this juncture point out that they advocated the current reforms on the basis of the empirical research performed by William Sanders showing that individual teachers can have very large effects on student achievement for good or ill. I do not question his findings, but those findings tell us nothing about the policy conclusions that should be drawn from them. Indeed, I believe that I could just as easily use that finding to justify the reforms advocated in this proposal.

Unlike the current reforms, the reforms in accountability system design advocated in this paper have been tried in several variations by a number of countries, provinces and states that have used them to rise to the top of the ranks worldwide in education performance. There is plenty of evidence for the effectiveness of these reforms, at scale.

Not only that, but I have endeavored to show that these reforms are not just empirically sound, but also have a very firm theoretical basis, grounded in a long and very sturdy body of research on the management of professionals in many walks of life, research done over half a century, which now

undergirds the management, organization and personnel policies of the world's leading firms.

Isn't it time to abandon misplaced ideology and replace it with policies based on the facts?



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### MARC S. TUCKER



Marc S. Tucker is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Center on Education and the Economy.

He is an internationally recognized expert on academic and occupational standards and assessment, and has also been among the leaders in researching the policies and practices of the countries with the best education systems in the world. Tucker served in the '70s as the Associate Director of the National Institute of Education, in charge of the nation's government-funded research on education policy. He then created the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy at Carnegie Corporation of New York, and authored its report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. He led the Carnegie Forum team as it created the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and served as the Board's first president. Tucker then founded the National Center on Education and the Economy and, in that role, created the Commission on the Skills of the American

Workforce, the *New* Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, the New Standards Consortium, America's Choice (a comprehensive school reform program), the National Institute for School Leadership, *Excellence for All* (a high school reform program), and the Center on International Education Benchmarking. Cited by President Clinton as a major intellectual contributor to Clinton Administration education and labor policies, he was appointed by the President to the National Skill Standards Board. He has also served as author, co-author or editor of many articles and several books and reports, including, *America's Choice: high skills or low wages!*; *Standards for Our Schools: How to Set Them, Measure Them and Reach Them*; *Thinking for a Living: Education and the Wealth of Nations*; *The Principal Challenge*; *Tough Choices or Tough Times*; *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States*; and *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems*. Mr. Tucker is the recipient of the ECS 2014 James Bryant Conant Award for outstanding individual contributions to American education and has testified frequently before the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.



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**The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE)** is a not-for-profit created to develop proposals for building the world-class education and training systems that the United States must have if it is to continue to be a world-class economy. The National Center engages in policy analysis and development and works collaboratively with others at the local, state and national levels to advance its proposals. Visit [www.ncee.org](http://www.ncee.org) for more information.

**The Center on International Education Benchmarking**, a program of NCEE, conducts research on the world's most successful education systems to identify the strategies those countries have used to produce their superior performance. Through its web portal, monthly newsletter, and a weekly update of education news around the world, CIEB provides up-to-date information and analysis on those countries whose students regularly top the PISA league tables. Visit [www.ncee.org/cieb](http://www.ncee.org/cieb) to learn more.

NCEE's pilot school program, *Excellence for All*, brings aligned instructional systems used by the best-performing countries to U.S. high schools. These systems have a track record of producing world-class syllabi, instructional materials, examinations and teacher training. *Excellence for All* is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), enabling participating high schools to not just lay the foundation for the CCSS but to get a head start on implementation. Currently, schools across Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky and Mississippi are participating. Visit [www.ncee.org/e4a](http://www.ncee.org/e4a) for more information.

In 1999, NCEE was asked to create a design for a new kind of national organization to train school principals to lead high performing schools. Three years later, NCEE announced the launch of the **National Institute for School Leadership**. Since its inception, NISL has served over 8,000 principals in more than twenty states; seven state departments of education have chosen NISL to support their school leaders. NISL's Executive Development Program gives districts and states the capacity to strengthen the leadership of both serving principals and aspiring leaders, and is proven to raise student achievement. Visit [www.nisl.net](http://www.nisl.net) to learn more.

Marc Tucker will strike a chord with those who want the next version of accountability for public education to lead to real fixes rather than Band-Aids for the current system. *Fixing Our National Accountability System* delivers far more than a suggestion based in theory; it defines a fact-based, attainable solution that recognizes students' responsibility in their own education, respects educators as true professionals, requires honest assessments of struggling schools' needs, and offers a common-sense role for testing. True to form, Tucker also delivers tough medicine for us all to swallow and I applaud his candor in highlighting a plan with promise.

**Dennis Van Roekel**

**Outgoing President, National Education Association**

There are few, if any, aspects of the American education system during the past decade that have been more debated than accountability. Test-based accountability that relies on frequently employed standardized assessments has in many ways taken away much of the professional responsibility and pride that most teachers claim are the moral drivers of the teaching profession. *Fixing Our National Accountability System* takes a critical look at the current accountability policies in the United States and offers a welcomed plan that is based on practices and models in the most successful education systems globally. One of the advantages of this plan is a shift from bureaucratic consequential accountability to more professional peer-to-peer responsibility in all American schools.

**Pasi Sahlberg**

**Visiting Professor of Practice, Harvard Graduate School of Education**

**Author, *Finnish Lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland***

This paper makes a powerful case that the United States needs to rethink its education accountability system. Tucker traces the way the thinking about accountability in business has changed over the last century and suggests that the schools might take a look at that evolution. You may agree or disagree with Tucker's recommendations, but, either way, this is a paper you ought to read.

**Governor John Engler**

**President, Business Roundtable**

Marc Tucker has once again authored a thought provoking piece. The premise is that we must look at the entire education system and not put blame on individuals for the failures of the U.S. education system. Marc is clear that nations outperforming the U.S. provide examples that we need to study. This piece is a must read for policymakers as they chart the course for next generation accountability systems.

**Terry Holliday**

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