

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article in today's Washington Post, "From Teachers to Drill Sergeants," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, June 12, 2001]

# FROM TEACHERS TO DRILL SERGEANTS

(By Jay Mathews)

I have watched hundreds of teachers over the last two decades and am sure of one thing: I couldn't last two days in their jobs. After the first day, my throat would be sore, my legs wobbly and my energy level needle pointing below empty. That night I would fall asleep trying to make a new lesson plan.

The next morning I would call in sick, making it clear I had an incurable, terminal illness.

So it is unbelievably presumptuous of me to write columns and give speeches on how to make schools better. I regularly remind myself, and anyone who might be listening, that when it comes to talking about education, I am just a balding, 5-foot-6-inch playback machine. The thoughts are not mine, but those of the many educators, as well as students and parents, who have patiently explained to me over the years what is going on, and why.

I am always amazed that such smart and busy people have time for me. That is especially true these last few weeks. Scores of readers have responded to the request in my May 22 column for a precise accounting of how the new state achievement tests affect teaching. I now have a much deeper appreciation of what the tests—and administrators' ill-considered reaction to them—have done to many schools.

Only about half of the teachers who wrote me said they had been forced to change their teaching, but that is because in many cases they refused to alter what was working for their students. "My philosophy has long been, continues to be, and . . . will continue to be largely the test," said Al Dieste, who teaches at-risk middle schoolers at Springfield Community Day School, a public school in Columbia, Calif. "I teach; the test be damned."

Lisa Donmoyer, a kindergarten to eighth grade science specialist in Easton, Md., said "a rich, interesting classroom is more likely to produce students who do well on the test than a classroom where the teacher employs the 'drill and kill' method."

But in many cases, teachers said, administrators made it very difficult to do the right thing.

At one Fairfax County high school, non-honors students were dropped from in-class National History Day essay writing activities so they would have more time to study for the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, even though some non-honors students had won previous district competitions.

Hewitt, Tex., high school teacher Donna Garner resigned in protest when her popular program for teaching the lost art of grammar was banned because it conflicted with the step-by-step schedule for preparing for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) tests.

A third-grade teacher in Fort Worth, said her principal asked her if she had designated as many students as possible for special education classes so they would be exempt from the tests and make the school average higher.

Raymond Larrabee was told his son's eighth-grade honors English class would not have time to read all of Charles Dickens' "David Copperfield" because there were too many topics to cover for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MACAS) test.

A Florida principal told a novice teacher that her wide-ranging discussions of the possible answers to sample test questions was a waste of time. Just tell them which answers are correct, she was told.

Doug Graney, a history teacher at Herndon High School in Fairfax, and a recently retired Arlington teacher who asked not to be identified, dropped their engaging approach to U.S. history because of the SOLs. They had been starting with post World War II history, stimulating family discussions about events their students' parents and grandparents had witnessed. Then they went back to colonial days to show how it had all started.

The e-mails illuminated two problems that I think all sides in the testing debate would

acknowledge. First, some states may be demanding that teachers cover too much, ensuring once-over-tightly instruction. Second, many principals, moved by blind panic or cross-town rivalry, are demanding more test prep—taking practice tests, learning testing strategies, memorizing key essay words—than is necessary or useful.

Problem one is something for state school boards and superintendents to ponder. Problem two is, at least in part, something that teachers can do something about.

Okay. I know. I am the coward who lacks the fortitude to even try teaching. But I think many educators are right when they say that too many of their colleagues are obeying their principals rather than their principles.

Even pointy-headed, fire-breathing managers will back off if key employees tell them results will only come if they butt out. That takes gumption, but it is worth a try.

Gerald Gontarz, a sixth-grade science and social studies teacher in Plymouth, NH., drops raw chicken eggs from airplanes and sends up hot air balloons to involve kids in his lessons. "Much of the time I spend on this stuff will not help my students take the test," he said. But "it really turns them on, and honestly, there is no state test that measures students' motivation."

Kenneth Bernstein, a ninth-grade social studies teacher in Prince George's County, stated what should be the teacher's creed: "I will not object to testing if you will allow me to get my kids ready the best way I can, and not also mandate the specific steps of instruction, for then I cannot teach the individual child."

I sensed some teachers are having second thoughts about groveling before the testing gods. Graney, for instance, told me in a follow-up e-mail that he plans to return to his reverse approach to U.S. history.

The results are still important. A teacher should be able to raise his class's overall achievement level a significant amount from September to April or May. Some students will falter because of unhappy home lives or test anxiety or other factors beyond a teacher's control, but on average there should be progress. If there isn't, I don't think the teacher can blame the test.

Many educators will object to this. They say the tests are too narrow and their own assessments of each child should be enough. In many cases, they are right, but parents cannot stay in the classroom all year making certain of this. I don't think I will ever be comfortable without an independent measure of how my child and her school are doing, and I think the vast majority of parents feel the same way.

I think we can agree on one thing: Principals and superintendents should not force good teachers to turn themselves into drill sergeants if there are better ways to teach the material. Administrators should set the goals and let their teachers decide how to meet them, then find ways to help those teachers who do not measure up.

Most principals already do that, but since so many of them are portrayed as clumsyvillains by my e-mail correspondents, they deserve a chance to defend themselves. My e-mail address is mathews@washpost.com. How many of you administrators are telling your teachers to fill their class time with practice tests? Are you sure that is the best way to go?

Mr. WELLSTONE. This is a piece Jay Mathews wrote. I want to give some examples from this article. There is one thing he mentions that is really important:

I have watched hundreds of teachers over the last two decades and am sure of one

thing: I couldn't last two days in their jobs. After the first day, my throat would be sore, my legs wobbly and my energy level needle pointing below empty. That night I would fall asleep trying to make a new lesson plan. The next morning I would call in sick, making it clear that I had an incurable, terminal disease.

Then the article gets much more serious. Part of the insulting assumption of this legislation is that the teachers in this country don't want to be held accountable, that we now have to do the tests to show that they really are not doing their job.

There are, of course, teachers you will find who subtract from children, but many of them are saints. And I doubt that there is one Senator who condemns these teachers who could last an hour in the classrooms they condemn. If you go and visit schools, teachers are talking about other issues: What happens to children before they get to school; the whole question of kids who come to kindergarten way behind. They are talking about the lack of affordable housing, children who are coming to school hungry today in America, class size and all of the rest of it. That is what they are talking about. But our response is to go to these tests and to assume that somehow, once children are tested, everything will become better.

I want to give some examples Jay Mathews gives today, about the effect that an over-reliance on testing can have on the classroom. He writes:

Lisa Donmoyer, a kindergarten to eighth grade science specialist in Easton, Md., said "a rich, interesting classroom is more likely to produce students who do well on the test than a classroom where the teacher employs the 'drill and kill' method."

But in many cases, teachers said, administrators make it difficult to do the right thing.

Hewitt, Tex., high school teacher Donna Garner resigned in protest when her popular program for teaching the lost art of grammar was banned because it conflicted with the step-by-step schedule for preparing for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skill (TAAS) tests.

A third grade teacher in Fort Worth said her principal asked her if she had designated as many students as possible for special education classes so they would be exempt from the tests and make the school average higher.

Raymond Larrabee was told his son's eighth grade honors English class would not have the time to read all of Charles Dickens' "David Copperfield" because there were too many topics to cover for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test.

A Florida principal told a novice teacher that her wide-ranging discussion of the possible answers to sample test questions was a waste of time. Just tell them which answers are correct, she was told.

Doug Graney, a history teacher at Herndon High School in Fairfax, and a recently retired Arlington teacher who asked not to be identified, dropped their engaging approach to U.S. history because of the [Virginia standard of learning test]. They had been starting with post World War II history, stimulating family discussions about events their students' parents and grandparents had witnessed. Then they went back to colonial days to show how it all started.

So I just want to issue this warning, about where I am afraid we are heading: I think in the absence of the resources and with the overreliance on tests that is emerging, what we are going to have is, as one teacher put it so well to Jonathan Kozol, you are going to have great teachers living in "examination hell." A lot of the really good teachers are going to get out. In fact, they are now. Some of the really great teachers are just refusing to be drill instructors, teaching to tests, tests, tests. They are leaving. This is the opposite direction from where we should be going.

It is very much the case that the best teachers are the ones who are not going to want to be teaching to these tests. And frankly, some of the worst teachers can do it.

When I am in schools, and I have been in a school about every 2 weeks for the last 10 and a half years I ask the students, when we get into a discussion of education: What do you think makes for a good education? You are the experts. Before class size, before technology, before anything else, they say: Good teachers.

Then I say: What makes for a good teacher? I never hear students say: Well, the really good teachers are the teachers who teach to worksheets. The really good teachers are the teachers who basically have us memorizing all the time and then regurgitating that back on tests. They talk about teachers who spend time with them, teachers who fire their imagination, teachers who don't just transmit knowledge but basically empower them to figure out how to live their lives. They talk about teachers who get the students to connect personally to the books that are being discussed, to the ideas that are being discussed, to how those ideas affect their lives. That is what they talk about.

That is not the direction we are going, not with what we are bringing down from the Federal Government, top-down to school districts all across our land. Again, that is why this amendment is so important.

I thank my colleague for the amendment. I am proud to support him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?