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classroom at Madison Middle School in West Seattle. Then in 2008, I was laid off. That year I traveled with my wife, who was in international health, to Haiti. We got to Haiti two days before the earthquake hit. On returning to the States, I was heartbroken to see the United States send one of our most strident proponents of corporate education reform to Haiti: Paul Vallas, the CEO of the public schools in Chicago, Philadelphia and New Orleans after Katrina. They have no public schools left in New Orleans: It's 100 percent charters. That showed me that this is a global problem. Big-time global corporates like Pearson (and other) textbook and testing companies are pushing beyond the U.S. borders to try to capture markets around the world.

M.W.: *Do you think the driving force behind it is the textbook and testing companies, or is there more to it than that?*

J.H.: It's an important part, that there are companies that profit directly off of the idea that knowledge is the endless string of facts that they print in their textbooks or that they create tests to judge students' ability to eliminate wrong answer choices. But it's also about busting the teachers' unions. The high-stakes testing craze is about getting rid of seniority protections and making teachers' jobs much more tenuously tied to the fluctuation of test scores. These test scores are highly invalid, (especially) the value-added model that tries to measure an individual teacher's contribution to an individual student.

M.W.: *That model sounds like a classic misuse of statistics.*

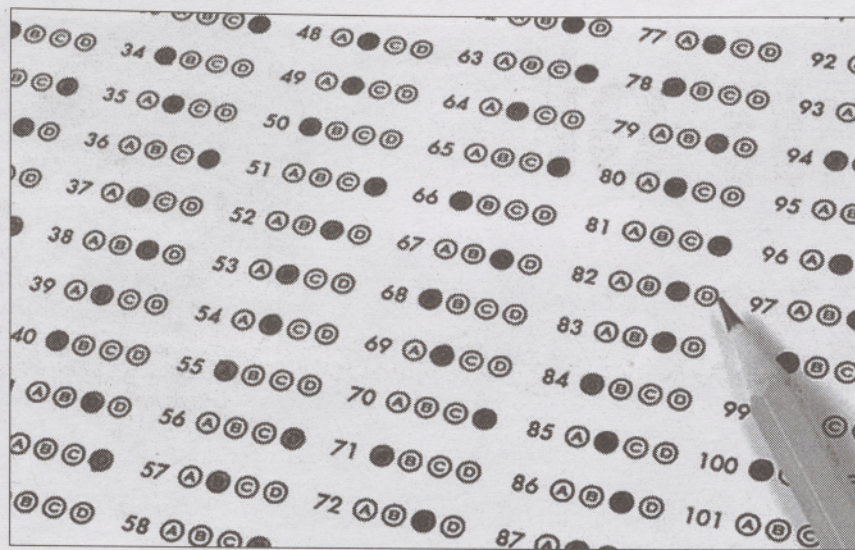
J.H.: Exactly. The American Statistical Society said that value-added modeling is junk science in education. This complicated formula leaves so many factors out that it's a meaningless number. In my book I highlight a teacher in Florida who won a teacher of the year award, but the value-added modeling showed he was in the lowest percentile. The scores fluctuate between 25 and 50 percent, year to year, so a teacher that's rated highly one year has a 50 percent chance to be rated very low the next year.

They're dedicated to reducing the process of teaching and learning to a single score, so that they can use that score to fire teachers, tie their pay to it, deny students graduation, close schools. Then they can turn education over to the privatizers, who want to push charter schools, private companies that want to bring in more online learning instead of students being mentored by human educators.

We're moving away from an education into what I call a "testucation." In Chicago a parent told me their kindergartner takes 14 standardized tests a year. The entire year is preparing for the next exercise in filling in bubbles.

M.W.: *When did you first realize that standardized testing was not good education?*

J.H.: I went to Garfield as a student. The tests had me convinced that I wasn't intelligent. School was very arduous, and I was not happy to be here. I was glad that I was on the baseball team, but the tests



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shamed me. It wasn't until I had some teachers really invest time and show me how education could be about challenging racism that I realized that standardized tests had missed something about me.

M.W.: *In the book, you talk about how the generation of new teachers has grown up with all these standardized tests and doesn't know that education can be something different.*

J.H.: They are transforming a generation to believe that knowledge is the ability to eliminate wrong answer choices and to live in fear of making a mistake. Mistakes should be wonderful opportunities to see something in a different light, to evaluate why you made that decision and how to move beyond that. Instead, mistakes are horrible transgressions that must be punished severely. When you train a whole generation to live in fear of making mistakes, you kill creativity, because what is creativity? It's the ability to try new things out, to experiment and to make mistakes and grow from them.

In the book I refer to the "testocracy," the elite strata of society that is trying to transform education to make it about testing. Eli Broad, one of the richest people in the U.S., has a foundation that trains superintendents in a corporate style of education reform. (Editor's note: Broad co-founded homebuilding company, KB Home, and founded retirement-savings company SunAmerica, both Fortune 500 companies.) We received one of his graduates here in Seattle, who happened to sit on the board of the organization that made the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test. She didn't disclose that when the Seattle Public Schools adopted the MAP test.

M.W.: *That was (former superintendent Maria) Goodloe-Johnson.*

J.H.: Yes. When we adopted that test, I got behind a [union] resolution saying that the MAP test was an inappropriate measure of teacher contributions to student learning. That passed. A couple of years later I got a

phone call from a teacher here at Garfield who told me she was going to refuse to give the exam. She began talking to others. Uniformly, the staff here thought this test was a complete waste of time and demoralizing to students.

Our ninth grade algebra teacher talks about how he saw geometry questions on the test: they don't take geometry until the next year. Our English-language-learner teachers talked about how the test was culturally and linguistically inappropriate for their students. As a social studies teacher, what frustrated me was how our computer labs were monopolized for weeks at a time to administer this test.

The staff voted unanimously to refuse the test. That kicked off what became known as the "Education Spring." We saw walkouts of students in Oregon, Colorado, Chicago. We saw mass opt-out organizations of parents. Last year some 60,000 parents across New York state opted their kids out of the tests; there were teacher boycotts in Chicago and New York.

M.W.: *You talk in the book about the effect of the boycott on your teaching.*

J.H.: The year of the MAP test boycott, history came to life in a way that it never has before. We did a re-enactment of the Montgomery bus boycott. You've never seen students research and argue their position as vehemently as that year when they were in the middle of organizing their own boycott. History wasn't just something to be read dryly out of a textbook. It was something that could empower them in their own struggles.

M.W.: *Would you just eliminate tests?*

J.H.: Teachers are not against tests. We invented tests. We want to know if students learn what we're teaching them. The problem is, these tests are not assessing what we're teaching. Oftentimes we don't get the results until the next year. The assessments that we make every day, whether it's checking for understanding by asking questions or more formal

assessments, give us much better feedback. By inundating our schools with high stakes testing, we're actually eliminating assessment altogether and actually aren't getting any useful feedback on the things we're actually teaching. We're getting feedback on their ability to eliminate wrong answer choices.

M.W.: *What kind of assessment should replace these tests?*

J.H.: One of the amazing parts of the research for this book was talking with the Consortium Schools in New York. The Consortium Schools don't have to administer the standardized tests for the state. They're public schools; they have more high-needs students than the general population. These schools have better outcomes than the rest of the schools in New York state. They have an inquiry-based approach to education and assessment that empowers students to pursue questions that they're interested in and then show what they know.

They don't want to know, can you fill in a bubble, can you eliminate a wrong answer choice, can you make a right guess? They want to know, can you develop a thesis, can you find evidence to back up that thesis, can you argue it convincingly? The students develop a thesis and do research over time and then present that to a panel of experts.

The Consortium Schools have higher graduation rates than the general schools; they have more college attendance, kids staying in college longer. Their model is a powerful testament to what real education reform would look like.

M.W.: *Are there tests coming up here that we should be watching for?*

J.H.: The Smarter Balance tests that are tied to Common Core are going to be offered for the first time this spring. We'll see if teachers in Seattle begin revolting against this new wave of high-stakes tests.

M.W.: *What's the basic message of your book?*

J.H.: We can reclaim education as educators, students, parents and teachers.

Across the country all the different constituencies of the education community are coming together to reclaim education and to say it should be about civic courage. We want education to be about solving the real problems we face in our world, like how to get the hole fixed in the ceiling in the classroom, how to keep kids from ending up in prison like their fathers and their uncles, how to stop the wars that are endlessly proliferating and, most terrifying of all, climate change. If education is about filling in a bubble, then our future as a human species has a limited amount of time left. Education should be dedicated to developing leaders who can identify problems in their community and their nation and their world and organize collaboratively to address those problems.

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