

James E. McDermott, Ed.D.

Hello. My name is James McDermott. I am a teacher- 34 years in the Worcester Public Schools. I am a Massachusetts State Teacher of the Year. When I taught at University Park Campus School, it was cited as the only school in the State successful with urban children. I helped create the Massachusetts Frameworks and the MCAS test. In fact, I taught Massachusetts' teachers and the folks at the testing company in Texas how to score the MCAS essay. I was a college professor in the Education Department at Clark University. I teach now at Cape Cod Community College. I consulted on best practice teaching all over the country. My children graduated from public schools. I was a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Through my experience I have learned a lot about teaching and learning and assessment, especially in the urban setting.

Here is a short list of 9 things I know:

1. A teaching philosophy centered on high stakes testing is educationally unsound.
2. The focus on high-stakes testing too often leads to bad teaching and bad learning.
3. High-stakes testing too often actually lowers expectations for students and for teachers.
4. High-stakes testing too often tempts teachers to resort to deficit teaching practices.
5. The proliferation of high-stakes testing makes millionaires of corporate leaders under the guise of helping poor kids.

6. That private schools have not jumped on the testing bandwagon should be a red flag for those of us committed to public school children.
7. Real teaching and real learning help youngsters get on the path toward deep understanding not only of important content, but also of themselves as developing human beings. Deep understanding is not the agenda of standardized test enthusiasts.
8. Before voting for more standardized testing, people should insist on seeing a copy of an actual test (Don't you think it strange that the PARCC tests are kept so secret?), people should at least listen to the concerns of parents who are part of the growing opt-out movement, people should talk to a real teacher who has been ordered to stop teaching in order to start prepping for standardized tests, people should investigate who actually benefits financially as we move on to these new-age exams.
9. Finally, people should ask, "What do we want from our public schools?" If your answer is like mine that we want young people to become informed, thinking, and responsible citizens and that we want them each day to grow more just, more wise, more creative, more open, more courageous, more intelligent, more giving, more thoughtful, more tolerant, more free, more aware of their own unique potential - then give teachers, parents and students **that** message so we can start spreading **that** gospel – the first step, is to see the evidence that clearly shows that standardized testing too often creates policies that are actually hurting our own children and driving our best teachers from the profession.

Thanks for your time.