

School choice

Education



Article Sell Schools not test scores. Alfie Kohn. One of the deciding factors for families buying a new house seems to be the quality of schools in the neighborhood. However it is a false assumption of realtors that the quality of the school is measured by the test scores- high scores mean good schools. Kohn points out that the school test scores are in fact related to the socio-economic status of the families living in the neighborhood as wealthier neighborhoods have higher scores. There are reasons offered for why standardized tests scores are not a good indication of good education. Students who memorize and only learn superficially for the test are able to do well as the tests only measure temporary retention of facts and low-level skills. The tests are usually multiple-choice type tests so that they do not require a high level of critical thinking or test -taking skills. They are also timed so that speed matters more than thoughtfulness. Additionally they are norm-referenced so that they really show who is better than whom and not necessarily an individual's ability. Talented hard-working students do not do well on these tests.

Parents should ask questions about the school and not make buying decisions based on the standardized test scores. Some of the qualities to look for in a good school are size, type of teaching and activities. Smaller schools are better as there is more of a sense of community that encourages learning. Teachers who create a democratic class help students to learn to make good decisions. When teaching is done by projects and hand-on activities students enjoy learning more and are more motivated. If teachers are guiding students to learn by understanding ideas rather than just rote memorization of facts then those schools will be more attractive.

The type of schools could be a deciding factor in choosing a neighborhood to
<https://assignbuster.com/school-choice/>

live in; but the school should be judged by these qualities and not by standardized test scores.

Article 2 Some teachers worry that high-stakes testing neglects subjects such as art. Dont fall

into the " Test Us Too!" trap. By Alfie Kohn

One disturbing consequence of high stakes testing is the reduction or elimination of activities that are not tested. Teachers feel that they cannot spend time on such things as class meetings to promote decision-making, discussing current events and interdisciplinary projects and even recess.

Whatever is not on the test gets eliminated. Just as students who are only interested in grades are famous for asking if they have to know something, now teachers who are only teaching to test are asking ' do we have to teach this?'.

When testing at a given grade is limited to Math and language arts then the other subjects such as science, social studies and art suffer. This has created a new difficulty for teaching and teachers because if they are only teaching a subject for the test then this may lead to poor teaching. On the other hand some teachers may choose to have their subjects tested just so that they can keep the subject on the curriculum Kohn refers to this as ' bargaining with the devil'. It can mean that the curriculum gets twisted to fit into the testing mode. As one language arts teacher is reported to have said that the class has not been doing any reading since they started to prepare for the reading test. Other subjects are suffering the same fate. For example in Science and Social Studies students are simply learning dates and definitions etc only to pass the tests. These facts and information are soon forgotten.

There is a disturbing consequence where good teaching means poor test

<https://assignbuster.com/school-choice/>

preparation and conversely preparing for the test encourages the worst kind of teaching. More thought and discussion are needed to consider the cost of these tests in terms of what they mean for a teacher who has to teach to the test.