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Is It Just Me, Or Are There Other Parents and Teachers Out There Confused About SOL Reading Assessments?

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ABSTRACT

This article describes an incident involving the author, his daughter, and sample items from a Standards of Learning assessment. The author uses this incident to describe his increasing confusion with SOL assessments, especially in the area of reading, and proposes that educators spend less time “testing our kids” with SOL assessments, and more time “testing their theories” so that assessment better reflects recent advances in reading and learning theory.

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri Negro dialect; the “extremes” form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary “Pike County” dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms. I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

Mark Twain
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1997)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to raise questions and concerns about the increasing use of Standards of Learning (SOL) testing as a tool to assess reading comprehension. It is intended to promote reflective thinking about reading assessment, as well as start some new conversations about the development of assessment procedures that best reflect recent advances in reading.

I begin by sharing a recent incident involving my daughter, myself, and sample items from a Standards of Learning assessment

test. Next, I use this incident to describe my increasing confusion and concern with this type of assessment, especially in the area of reading. Then, I discuss the notion of assessment as inquiry as an alternative view that can support both student and teacher growth. I end by describing why we need to spend less time testing our kids on reading, and more time testing our theories about reading.

BACKGROUND

As a parent and a teacher, I am both concerned and confused about the increasing use of Standards of Learning (SOL) reading assessments in educational evaluation. My concern was heightened after recently reading *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with my daughter.

One of the most appealing characteristics of this story is that Mark Twain creates a cast of unique characters, e.g., Huck Finn, Becky Thatcher, Aunt Polly, and Injun Joe, who speak different dialects but nonetheless succeed at communicating quite well with each other. While reading, it occurred to me that these characters, while not real, are in some ways both like and unlike real educators today.

Schools are influenced by a variety of stakeholders including school administrators, building principals, curriculum specialists, guidance counselors, classroom teachers, parents, and students. Typically, these stakeholders hold different perspectives and agendas, and therefore speak very different discourses on schooling, curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment. That is, each of these stakeholders use different discourses to describe different educational problems and propose different educational solutions. To be sure, these individuals try to talk to each other, but, unlike Twain's characters, are not necessarily succeeding all that well. No where is this lack of communication more evident than in recent efforts to develop and implement SOL assessments. In fact, based on a recent personal experience, I've come to believe that SOL assessments quite possibly are sending confusing, even contradictory, messages to parents, teachers, and children in the area of reading.

SOL ASSESSMENTS

SOL assessments are currently being developed and implemented at both the state and national levels. Typically, these assessments are administered to students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 across academic disciplines such as English, Mathematics, History, Science, and Social Studies. The proliferation of SOL assessments appears to be a response by the test-making industry to the concerns of a variety of educational stakeholders at many different levels (politicians, business leaders, school administrators, curriculum coordinators, building principals, teachers, parents, and students) who believe, based on

national and state testing results, that public education is in serious crisis, especially in the area of reading (Eisener, 1982; Applebee, et.al., 1988; Langer, et.al., 1990; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1994; Humphrey, 1992).

The crisis in public education is often described in terms of academic standards. The concern is that academic standards don't exist, or when they do, they are set so low that they have become virtually meaningless. In response, many advocates of education reform have proposed a wide range of solutions including: 1) raising academic standards; 2) getting back to basics; 3) holding teachers and schools more accountable; 4) requiring continued professional development; 5) rewarding teachers and schools for increasing student scores on standardized tests; and 6) developing and implementing SOL assessments. Of these, increasing numbers of educators believe that developing high Standards of Learning and implementing rigorous SOL assessments are the keys to educational reform. The rationale is that standards of learning set clear and concise expectations for what teachers should teach and what students should learn, and SOL assessments provide a benchmark for measuring student performance and achievement (Virginia Standards of Learning, Field Test 1997).

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SOL ASSESSMENTS

Recently, I had a personal experience with SOL assessment. This incident involved my daughter and a booklet containing SOL assessment sample items. My daughter's name is Ferris, and at the time of this incident she was in the eighth grade. One day she came home after school, and before I could even say, "Hi, Ferris, how was school today?," she pulled a booklet out of her backpack, and said, "Here, this is for you. My homeroom teacher said that it's about some test that all eighth graders are going to take next week. Parents are supposed to read it." She handed me the booklet, and went directly upstairs to her room, without snacks or homework, presumably to talk on the phone (I've learned that many eighth graders believe that after school is a time for them to talk at home to the same people they have talked to at school for much of the day). Sensing I wasn't that welcome upstairs for a while, I stayed downstairs in the kitchen and started to read the booklet.

Basically, the booklet was an introduction to the standards of learning test that was scheduled to be field tested the following week with students across the school district in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. In the introduction it explained that the purpose of field testing is to test the test by trying out questions before they are used on future SOL tests, and that the field test will ensure that test questions are well written and fair to all students. Later, it went on to explain that the aim of the booklet was to provide sample test items to help you (teachers and parents) understand the format of the test your student will take. What

it didn't explain was who actually wrote this booklet. So, I caught myself asking: Who were the authors of this document? Were they educators in the state department of education? Commercial publishers? Testing specialists? University psychometricians? Were any parents or teachers involved in the development of this test, especially teachers in the specific content areas that were being assessed? Did teachers have any opportunity to review the test prior to administering it to students? Is this the way other states are conducting field-tests of SOL sample tests? I wasn't sure.

I sat at the kitchen table and started to browse more thoroughly through the booklet. It was organized according to different grade levels and content areas. I first turned to the sample items in Grade 3 — English, and saw a prompt that read “Grade 3 questions will cover the English SOLs for kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3.” This prompt was followed by a short passage entitled *Nick's Cat*.

This story is about a little boy who discovers one day that his cat, Manka, is missing. With his parents the little boy tries to find Manka by searching the neighborhood, hanging up posters, and asking neighbors if they have seen the cat. One day a new neighbor, an elderly man named Mr. Goldman, visited Nick's house saying that he saw Nick's poster about a missing cat. He explained that a cat had moved into his shed to have her kittens recently, and the cat just might be Manka. Nick, his mother, and Mr. Goldman went to the shed and found Manka.

This passage totaled 278 words and was divided into nine paragraphs, with each paragraph averaging approximately 31 words (longest paragraph = 42 words; shortest paragraph = 5 words). Each paragraph was numbered “for the student's reference.” The following prompt was provided after the passage: “Read this part of a sentence from paragraph three in the story.” This prompt was followed by two multiple choice questions:

1. Nick's mom helped him make posters ...
Which word has the same vowel sound as make?
 - A. march
 - B. beak
 - C. rain
 - D. snack

2. This story is mostly about —
 - F. where mother cats like to have their kittens
 - G. how a boy tries to find his missing cat
 - H. how a boy meets one of his neighbors
 - I. how important it is to be a good neighbor

I then turned to the sample items in grade 5 — English (Reading/Literature and Research). Like the grade 3 section I saw a prompt that read “Grade 5 questions will cover the reading/literature

and research SOL's for grades 4 and 5." This prompt was followed by a short passage entitled *Better Than a Barn Raising*.

This story is about a time when a barn on Mr. Zook's farm had been hit by lightning and burned to the ground. One day the following week some of the neighbors, including a father, mother, and their two older sons, went to Mr. Zook's farm to work at raising a new barn. The youngest son, Aaron, was left behind with his grandpa so they could care for Daisy, Mr. Zook's mare who survived the fire and was ready to give birth to her foal. That same day Aaron noticed something wrong with Daisy. Grandpa told him that there was nothing wrong, but that Daisy was getting ready to give birth to her foal. Together, Aaron and his grandpa helped Daisy give birth to a beautiful colt that looking just like Daisy.

This passage totaled 485 words and was divided into 11 paragraphs, with each paragraph averaging approximately 44 words (longest paragraph = 77 words; shortest paragraph = 20 words). This passage was followed with a multiple choice question.

1. Aaron did not go to the barn raising because —
 - A. someone needed to stay at home with grandpa
 - B. he hadn't finished the chores he had been given
 - C. he was not old enough to help rebuild the barn
 - D. there weren't enough horses for the whole family

Finally, I turned to the sample items in grade 8 — English (Reading/Literature and Research). Like previous sections I saw a prompt that read "Grade 8 questions will cover the reading/literature and research SOL's for grade 6, 7, and 8." This prompt was followed by a short passage entitled *A New Naval Strategy*.

This story is about John Hawkins, an English sea commander, who created a new naval strategy for fighting ships to use in sea battles during the 16th century. Typically, grappling hooks were used to hold two ships next to each other while soldiers boarded enemy ships and won the battle. Hawkins believed this maneuver was too risky, and devised a strategy whereby ships were built lighter and faster and equipped with canons. With these ideas, he built a new navy for Queen Elizabeth. Later, this navy succeeded in defeating the Spanish armada sent by Philip II of Spain to conquer England.

This passage totaled 313 words and was divided into four paragraphs, with each paragraph averaging approximately 78 words (longest paragraph = 93 words; shortest paragraph = 64 words). This passage was followed with a prompt and a corresponding multiple choice question.

The chart shows some of the important ideas in the article.

How 16th Century Sea Battles Were Fought
Hawkins Rebuilds the Queen's Navy
British Navy Fights the Spanish Armada

Which of these ideas belongs in the empty box?

- A. Cannons Are Used on Queen's Ships
- B. Queen's New Navy Put to the Test
- C. Hawkins Considers Possible Changes
- D. Spanish Armada Sent to England

I'M JUST CONFUSED

Although the intent was different, after reading through this booklet I felt more confused than ever. In particular, I felt confused about the following:

Grade 3 Sample Items

What is the purpose of asking the question, "What word has the same vowel sound as make?" What relationship does it have to the story, *Nick's Cat*? How does reading the story better enable children later to answer this question correctly? In actual fact, children really don't even have to read this story, or any story for that matter, to answer this question. So what's the point? I suspect the purpose of this question is to test phonemic awareness. If so, then let's say so. Let's at least be intellectually and theoretically honest with teachers and parents by saying that the intent of this item, and others like it, is to assess ability to recognize individual words and understand sound/letter relationships.

Now, it seems to me that these items are useful but only if reading is conceptually and operationally defined primarily as a process of decoding text. However, if reading is defined as the process of creating personal meaning from text, I'm left wondering: 1) what definition (or definitions) of reading is driving SOL assessment?; 2) what messages does this testing definition send to students and teachers about what reading is and what it isn't?; and 3) what is the primary purpose of SOL assessment? Is it to assess the ability to decode, create meaning, or both? At issue might be the difference often made between reading (decoding) and reading comprehension (creating meaning). For me, the two terms, reading and comprehension are synonymous, but often aren't perceived or defined that way, especially by students. Perhaps this distinction partially explains why many students, especially in junior high and senior high school, who experience difficulties in reading are the same individuals who define reading as an act of recognizing words rather than a process of

creating, connecting, and integrating ideas (Bintz, 1997). To what extent does reading assessment perpetuate this perception?

Moreover, how does asking children to answer the question “This story is mostly about _____” use assessment in a way that best reflects recent advances in reading theory? It seems to me that, if anything, it reflects just the opposite, and as a result sends confusing and conflicting messages about reading to teachers, parents, and students. Many educators, especially reading educators, all too often tell teachers to teach critical thinking, create reading experiences for students where the focus is on meaning, support students to explore multiple interpretations of literature, provide students’ opportunities to discuss the books they read, and help them to make connections between different texts and different content areas. But then educators turn right around and use assessment procedures which test just the opposite.

For example, how does asking children to answer a single question with a single answer (and not any single answer, but the single right one, selected from a predetermined pool of possible single right answers) reflect what we tell teachers they should be teaching students to do in the classroom? I suspect it doesn’t. Therefore, I believe that we might be sending mixed, even contradictory, messages by using tests that assess children in isolated areas of reading which we tell teachers not to teach in isolation. How do we explain this apparent contradiction? Perhaps even worse, are we even aware that this is a contradiction?

Grade 5 Sample Items

If SOL assessments are designed to “set clear and concise expectations for what teachers should teach and students should learn,” then what expectations are being communicated to teachers about what they should teach about reading and to students about what they should learn about reading through sample items such as these? Stated differently, what messages about reading are we sending by asking students to read a short passage and then identify single right answers to multiple choice questions? Are we communicating that reading is simply a process of finding single answers, and involves little, if any, critical, inferential, or reflective thinking? Are we using SOL assessments as a means to get teachers to uniformly embrace, endorse, and perpetuate this view of reading? Are we holding teachers accountable for the extent to which they are successful at training students to correctly answer multiple choice questions? If so, how do we explain, much less reconcile, the fact that these messages hardly reflect the best we currently know about reading?

For instance, according to the booklet, the correct answer to the sample item question “Aaron did not go to the barn raising because —? is, C: “he was not old enough to help rebuild the barn.” Out of curiosity, I asked my daughter later that night to read the passage and

tell me what she thought was the correct answer. After reading, Ferris shrugged her shoulders, and rather nonchalantly stated: "Of course, C is the answer." "Why C, Ferris?", I responded. "Because it says so right in the text. Didn't you see that?" she said. "Where?", I asked. She pointed to the passage, and said, "Right here in paragraph 5. See, it says 'There'll be plenty of barn raisings for you when you are older.' That's the answer. How could you not see that? The answer was right in the text. They're always in the text. You just have to find it. All these tests are like that."

How do we expect students, like my daughter, to become critical readers when we use tests that require just the opposite? Why does such a chasm exist between recent advances in reading theory and reading assessment? Why don't we at least get our theoretical acts together by making our theoretical positions, our instructional practices, and our assessment procedures on reading more theoretically consistent? At present, using these sample items make us look more theoretically eclectic than theoretically consistent when it comes to the relationship between reading instruction and reading assessment.

What kinds of messages, then, should we be sending to teachers, students, and parents about reading? First and foremost, whatever messages we do send should at least reflect the best we currently know about reading. For instance, we know (and have known for some time now) that reading is a very complex process involving the personal construction of meaning through texts. We know that reading is strategic in that readers use a variety of strategies before, during, and after reading to create and recreate meaning. We know that some of these strategies include, but are not limited to, making personal connections, accessing and using background knowledge, constructing and testing out hypotheses, detecting anomalies, dealing with ambiguity, entertaining alternative interpretations, tinkering with possibilities, and evaluating explanations. Where are processes such as these being incorporated into SOL assessments? I'm not sure. I suspect, however, that having children provide single answers to single closed-ended questions might be sending conflicting, if not contradictory, messages about reading. How does answering multiple choice questions in any way afford children the opportunity to experience what strategic readers really do when they read? How do we ever expect to create strategic readers if the strategy we value most is simply the ability of students to find single answers to what they all too often perceive as "unimportant questions" (Routman, 1998)?

Grade 8 Sample Items

After reading through this section, I found myself making some connections across sample items and grade levels. One connection was that these sample items are sending messages to students and teachers not only about reading, but also about learning. For example, what kinds of messages is the question "Which of these

ideas belongs in the empty box?" sending to teachers and students about learning when we: 1) identify for them some of the important ideas in the passage; and 2) ask students to select correct responses from a pool of ideas somebody else has already created and already decided are important in the passage. With respect to reading, what messages are we sending to teachers and students about the nature of reading and the role of the reader? Aren't we saying that reading is little more than finding important ideas presumed to be inherent in the text? Aren't we saying that reading comprehension is little more than choosing between ideas others have already identified are important? If not, what are we saying? We say we want critical readers, then don't we have to allow readers to read critically? At the very least don't we have to allow test-takers, not test-makers, the opportunity, much less the right, to decide what ideas are important in a text and what are not?

But reading isn't the only problem. With respect to learning, what messages are we sending to teachers and students about the nature of learning and the role of the learner? Are we saying that learning is simply a matter of identifying and understanding discrete pieces of information? What else could we be saying when we ask students to fill in empty blanks with other people's understandings and ideas? If we're not saying this, what are we saying? Moreover, what are we saying about the role of the learner? What are we saying about who is in control of learning, test-makers or test-takers? If test-makers, how can students feel any ownership in and control of their own learning? If we believe (as I do), that nobody becomes literate without personal and active engagement in the process, then how do SOL assessments support students in this process? If they don't, how do we defend these assessments, philosophically, theoretically, intellectually, and even ethically? I'm not sure.

ASSESSMENT AS INQUIRY

At the beginning I admitted that I was confused about SOL assessments. Unfortunately, I still am. However, I don't feel as confused about some other related issues. For instance, I don't contend that the booklet discussed here is a unique, one of a kind phenomenon. Rather, it represents only one state's recent, and I might add well intentioned, attempt to develop, refine, and implement an SOL assessment that is valid, reliable, and useful. In actual fact, many other states are engaged in the same or similar process, most notably perhaps the Commonwealth of Kentucky which is currently implementing KERA (Kentucky Education Reform Act) I. Moreover, I suspect that other state-wide SOL assessments operate on many of the same assumptions about learning and reading as does the one I have described here. In many ways they have to share similar assumptions and use similar

testing formats (multiple choice) in order to make both within state and across state comparisons of student performance.

In addition, I don't feel confused about supporting high academic standards for students and teachers. Unfortunately, the issue isn't that simple. Educational reform isn't just about raising standards. Raising standards upwards, although a good start, is a one-dimensional response to a multi-dimensional problem. Height is only one dimension. But we don't live in a one-dimensional world; we live in a three-dimensional world, maybe even four or more. Therefore, one-dimensional standards are not very powerful or very useful in a multi-dimensional world.

What is certainly more powerful and potentially more useful are academic standards that are three-dimensional in nature; that is, standards that have depth and breadth as well as height. If we want students to achieve high academic standards, we have to do a better job at: 1) increasing the height of standards so that students can stretch themselves upward intellectually into different areas not previously considered; 2) broadening the scope of standards so that students can stretch themselves sideways intellectually in order to make connections and see patterns between different academic disciplines; and 3) deepening the view of standards so that students can stretch themselves intellectually by having opportunities to take reflective stances on their learning. I suspect students will achieve high academic standards only when they perceive them as worth pursuing. My hunch is that the only standards worth pursuing are the ones that have height, depth, and breadth. The problem will be to what extent can SOL assessments be developed that can accommodate three-dimensional academic standards.

In addition to academic standards, I don't feel confused about supporting assessment. Assessment isn't just important in education; it's critical to promoting good teaching and enhancing good learning. All too often assessment is seen as a standardized tool for verifying student learning. This is consistent with a one-dimensional view of academic standards. But a different view of assessment is required to accommodate standards that are three-dimensional in nature. One view is seeing assessment as inquiry.

Here, assessment is a tool for inquiring into and supporting student learning. It is a view that sees teachers as inquirers, learners, and reflective practitioners in the classroom. This view also sees all assessment as basically a process of self assessment. For students, this means assessment is a tool to better understand and reflect on what they have learned, how they learned it, and what they want to learn more about. Simply stated, I value assessment because I see it as a tool teachers and students can use to outgrow what they currently know about the complex nature of learning.

Perhaps an example might help. Consider the following reading invitation (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988):

Sketch-to-Stretch: After self-selecting and reading the same selection, students think about what they read and then draw a sketch of “what the selection meant to you” or “what you made of the read.” When sketches are complete, students slip the sketch over, and write a retelling of what they are trying to express in their sketch. Afterwards, students form a literature circle. Each person in the group shows his or her sketch to the others. Group participants study the sketch and say what they think the artist is attempting to say. Once everybody has had the opportunity to hypothesize an interpretation, the artist, of course, gets the last word.

First, it is important to state that this reading invitation actually blurs the distinction between instruction and assessment. That is, this invitation can function simultaneously as both an instructional strategy and an assessment tool in the classroom. Second, this invitation recognizes that nobody becomes literate without active engagement in the process, learning is a social engagement, and reading is a tool for learning. Third, unlike closed-ended and language-based multiple-choice test questions, this invitation is grounded in a multiple ways of knowing perspective and invites open-ended response to reading. And fourth, this invitation, and others like it, is a potential to support the idea of three-dimensional standards and assessment as inquiry.

For example, language is a communication system, but only one of many that humans have created and use to represent meaning. Others include art, music, dance, sculpture, improvisation, and photography to name just a few. Individuals, especially very young children, use (almost effortlessly) many of these communication systems as tools for learning as well as mediums for representing what is learned (Gardner, 1983).

SOL assessment, like many formal standardized tests, privileges language (and math) over all other communication systems. What is problematic is that readers comprehend more than what they can say in language (Gardner, 1991). Moreover, readers can often say different things depending on different communication systems. For instance, a musician might not be able to express in a short story what s/he can in a sonata; a painter might not be able to represent with clay and wheel what s/he can with oil and canvas; and a photographer might not be able to express through choreography what s/he can with photography.

Sketch-to-Stretch invites students to use art and language (oral and written) to create and represent personal meaning from text. I see art as a potential to gain both height and width on reading, a medium that enables readers, in the words of the fictional character Opus, “to depart the text” (Breathed, 1993) and represent higher and deeper

meanings. Likewise, I see language as a potential to gain depth on reading. When readers/artists discuss their sketches in literature circles, they use conversation to enhance and outgrow their current understandings of the text. They see different images, hear different voices, and start new conversations, and in the process explore alternative meanings not originally considered.

What can teachers learn about readers from Sketch-to-Stretch and other reading invitations like it? What can teachers learn about reading? What can students and teachers learn about themselves? I'm not clairvoyant, so the honest answer is I don't know. I suspect, however, that strategies such as this one enables students to take mental trips and intellectual journeys far beyond places where multiple-choice question tests traditionally allow them to go. Assessment, then, seems to be an inquiry tool to find out where they went and how they got there.

LET'S TEST OUR THEORIES MORE AND OUR KIDS LESS

Every teacher has a theory. Even the educator who cares only about practical strategies, whose mantra is "Hey, whatever works," is operating under a set of assumptions about human nature, about children, about that child sitting over there, about why that child did what she did just now. These assumptions color everything that happens in classrooms, from the texts that are assigned to the texture of casual interactions with students.

Despite their significance, such theories are rarely made explicit. No one comes out and says, "The reason I run the class this way is because I assume children are basically untrustworthy." But precisely because they have such a profound impact on every aspect of education, it is crucial to expose these beliefs and decide whether they can survive careful scrutiny. By the same token, whenever a consultant on discipline offers advice, we should hold that prescription up to the light, much as we might search for a hidden watermark on a sheet of paper. What is he or she assuming about kids — and, by extension, about all people? (Kohn, 1996).

I want to end by admitting one last confusion: Where is theory in all of this? Theory appears to be noticeably absent, or at least not given enough attention, in discussions about academic standards and SOL assessments. Why do we spend so much time creating new standards and developing new tests but, in comparison, spend so little time articulating, much less interrogating, the theory (or theories) that drive these standards and tests? Do we assume that standards and tests are theory-less in nature, and therefore exist in a theoretical vacuum? Do we also assume that the people involved in creating standards and developing tests are theory-less, too? Or do we assume that theory just

really isn't the problem, and therefore discussing theory might be interesting, but less important as creating standards and developing tests?

For me, theory is the main issue. Academic standards and SOL assessments, or any tests for that matter, are not theory-neutral. On the contrary, they are driven by implicit and explicit theories of learning and reading. The issue, then, isn't whether theory is used, but what theory is being used, and specifically what assumptions are being made about learning, learners, and readers. This is what I've tried to do in this article. I've tried not to look directly at one SOL assessment, but to look underneath it, to see what assumptions are being made about learning and learners, about reading and readers, as well as what messages these assumptions send to teachers and students.

Unfortunately, when I looked underneath this SOL assessment, I saw sample items being driven by questionable assumptions about learning and reading. Why do we use these assumptions to create new tests, and then use these tests to assess new standards? Why do we spend so much time creating tests that look new, but in terms of theoretical assumptions, really aren't? Why don't we spend more time testing our theories and less time testing our kids? That is, why don't we spend more time developing new theory and less time developing new tests. SOL assessments make testing sound different and at times even look different. But these new tests still appear to be driven by the same criteria as the tests they are replacing.

Finally, I recognize that this article is based on a single experience from a single state, and involves pilot items that may or may not actually appear later on a SOL assessment. I also recognize that not all statewide efforts directed at standards-based assessment suffer from these problems. My concern, however, is not only with the test items, but, more importantly, with the theoretical assumptions that are being used to create items such as these. And my point is that if we are going to continue testing our kids more than ourselves, then why don't we at least test them on criteria that are theoretically consistent with recent advances in reading and learning. We owe it to them, as well as to ourselves. As a parent and a teacher, I remain confused why we don't. Or is it just me?

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