



Diane Ravitch's blog, October 16, 2017:

## [Marion Brady: Test-Based Accountability is Dumbing Us Down](#)

Marion Brady, veteran educator and author, sent the following:

***Old joke, also known by research scientists as “The Streetlight Effect.”***

*A drunk is on hands and knees, under a streetlight, obviously searching.*

*Cop: Lose something?*

*Drunk: Yeash. My keys.*

*Cop joins hunt. No keys found.*

*Cop: You sure you lost them here?*

*Drunk: No, I think I lost them across the street.*

*Cop: Then why are you looking here?*

*Drunk: The light's better.*

As the current, corporately engineered “standards and accountability” education reform fiasco makes clear, non-educators assume schooling’s bottom-line purpose is to maximize learner understanding of the core curriculum.

So “core knowledge” gets taught and tested.

However, schooling’s bottom-line purpose isn’t to maximize learner understanding of the core curriculum, but to maximize learner ability to think—to abstract, adduce, analyze, anticipate, articulate, apply, categorize, compare, contrast, coordinate, correlate, describe, empathize, envision, extrapolate, imagine, infer, integrate, interpret, intuit—just to begin a much longer list.

So, why don’t standardized tests test learner ability to think?

Because they can’t. Of the dozens of identifiable thought processes, only two—recalling, and to a limited extent, applying—are simple enough to quantify and measure with sufficient precision to produce a meaningful number.

Inescapable conclusion: Today’s test-based reforms are dumbing kids and country down.

Solution: Give responsibility for evaluating learner performance back to classroom teachers, along with classes small enough for them to listen to what kids say and read what they write.

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