



Our Students Don't Deserve a Teacher Sick Out During a Pandemic

By Educator Barnes – December 14, 2020

Teachers For Good Trouble is a group that has formed to push back against standardized testing. According to their [website](#), they are a group of educators “focused on reforming schools to build safe, nurturing, and justice driven school communities by eliminating

standardized testing as a tool to measure performance during a pandemic.” How can there be justice without data?

The point of any assessment is to gather information about how students are doing. While school is in session, educators need this information to inform instruction. In a classroom, a teacher might give a formal or informal assessment to achieve this goal. Also, districts could mandate a district-wide assessment. My twin sons, who are in 4th grade, had to take NWEA MAP. Since they were remote, they took it while at home. They were in a breakout room with a school staff member and stayed on until they completed the assessment. NWEA also offers MAP skills which is a tool to help close gaps based on how students scored on the test. Without taking the test, the teacher would not have this tool available.

So, why aren't local assessments enough? I don't think there are any teachers, at least not any good ones, that are saying abandon all testing. Competent teachers know you have to know students' gaps to tailor instruction. The hill where some teachers want to die is the statewide standardized tests. Schools aren't obligated to share local data publicly. They don't have to say how students are doing on NWEA or some other assessment. Without this knowledge, students can fall through the cracks and stakeholders would not know. The students who tend to fall through the crack are typically of color and/or living in poverty.

These same students were already falling through the cracks before the pandemic. What they don't need is the pandemic being used as an excuse not to have public data to track where they are. This data is a needed snapshot in time. Remember standardized testing was already canceled at the end of last school year, so that data is not available. We also need to know which schools are doing well, so what they are doing can be shared to help other schools.

However, school buildings should not be closed down or taken over because of the data. This data should be used as a way to identify schools that need more support. Students need teacher support, but a sick out is not the answer. Instead of ditching work on December 15, 2020, teachers should show up to school and teach.