

Education – The Fallacy of Teaching to the Test



With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Law, each state is required to set their own performance benchmarks and through a series of tests assess the academic improvement of all students to ensure accountability for the billions of dollars being invested within the American public education system. One of the most repeated arguments is that this law or any accountability law mandates teachers to *teach to the test* and that *teaching to the test is wrong*.

From a performance improvement perspective, teaching to the test is 100% absolutely correct.

One of the best examples is the thousands of citizens in every state study who study to pass the state's driving test to earn a driver's license. The state driver's examination is to determine the applicant's knowledge of the laws pertaining to operating a motorized vehicle. Each question on the test can be found within the appropriate state driver's manual. High schools to commercial driving schools instruct their students based upon the information within the manual. If these instructors did not teach to the information within their state manuals, their students would not pass the state's exam. These teachers must teach to the test.

The real problem arises when students who have not mastered previously taught concepts are forced to play "catch up" within a very short time frame. This is where, I believe, this fallacy of teaching to the test originated. **Teaching to the test then is really a symptom of a greater problem, lack of mastery.**

During the last 5 years, I have surveyed over 500 teachers and 98% agreed that this is how learning works in the classroom

- ✓ Read It
- ✓ Learn It
- ✓ Test It
- ✓ Forget It
- ✓ Proceed to Next Lesson
- ✓ Repeat Process

This process is all about the acquisition of knowledge and not truly about **performance, - the application of knowledge.**

Performance comes in various stages from limited to mastery. Within the American public education, mastery, in all honesty, is not the desired end result for many teachers and students. If mastery was the desired end result, we would not have teachers who are not highly qualified, social promotion along with the many other programs that sacrifice mastery for issues of self-esteem, etc. nor would we continue to have an agrarian school structure.

Did you know that today's students spend less time in the classroom than students of 50 years ago even though information is doubling every year?

If we truly want to improve public education, which is one of the best explanations why America rose to be the Number One Super Power, then we must revamp the structure of [public education](#) to reflect a 21st Century performance driven society. In the meanwhile, public education must begin to develop the desire for young people especially [middle school, high school students](#) and even [college students](#) to become self-directed learners who demonstrate leadership skills by mastering key concepts necessary for their success. This solution would seem much more logical; align to the desired end results; avoid the blame game; eliminate wasted tax dollars and get to the performance results in real time.

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