



Other Viewpoints

Changing model offers optimism in student testing

State testing has for some time left something to be desired. Complaints that teachers have to “teach to the test” and the emphasis placed on massive testing have been commonplace. Yet few critics have offered solutions beyond a philosophical change in measuring education goals, and little has been said about the exact testing method, even if No Child Left Behind were to be abandoned.

Surprisingly enough, the University of Kansas may be the one to take a first step down that path. The school received a \$22 million federal grant – the biggest in its history – to conduct research into altering state assessments for students with special needs. And KU Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little said the hope is to effect change for testing beyond special education populations to all students.

The university plans to work with 11 states to develop a new model for standardized tests for special education students.

KU’s researchers hope to have a new testing system ready for special education students for the 2014-15 school year. If that is successful, they hope to extend their work to testing methods for all students.

Breaking away from one big test – and all the angst that goes into it – and creating smaller tests that could actually be guided by teachers’ lessons is one idea for change, and one they hope would remove the compulsion to “teach to the test.”

That sounds like a good place to start. No one is at their best every day; if a student is having a bad day on state assessment day, his scores go out the window. Assessing students over time may give a more realistic picture of where they stand.

And realistic is the one thing No Child Left Behind has not always accomplished.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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Villains not so villainous after all

Conservatives never seem to grow tired of chastising the “faceless bureaucrats” whose stifling regulations are hurting small businesses and the American economy as a whole.

They argue that these “czars” have no business meddling in the affairs of businessmen. The mere act of appointing such people is a blow to freedom and liberty that should be protested by all patriotic Americans. But who are these villainous creatures shamelessly intruding into the everyday lives of Americans and what big government regulatory agencies are they working for?

Margaret Hamburg is one of these villainous creatures. Hamburg currently heads the Food and Drug Administration. According to John B. Judis of the *New Republic*, Hamburg is renowned for her work while health commissioner of New York City in the 1990s. During her stint as commissioner she developed a program for controlling tuberculosis that led to a substantial decline in the disease.

Another appointed czar is William Craig Fugate, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Fugate previously worked as head of emergency management in Florida during the state’s numerous hurricanes. If there is someone more appropriate to head this agency, I haven’t heard of him.

One way conservatives have undermined regulatory agencies over the years is by expanding a unit of government known as the office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. This agency is capable of killing or delaying rules proposed by a regulatory agency by ar-



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

guing the costs of the regulations outweigh the benefits. This agency was first given this powerful role during President Ronald Reagan’s administration. John B. Judis writes that the conservative version of the cost-benefit analysis is flawed because it stressed the costs of regulation while not subjecting the costs of deregulation to the same cost-benefit scrutiny.

This flawed formula was made glaringly evident during President George H.W. Bush’s presidency. Judis writes that James McRae, acting head of the office during Bush senior’s presidency, argued that enacting regulations on chemicals that had been harming workers’ health would hurt the very workers the regulations were supposed to protect.

“If government regulations force firms out of business or into overseas production employment, employment of American workers will be reduced, making workers less healthy by reducing their income,” McRae said.

The opposition to regulatory agencies is strong among the public because there are many self-made small business owners who have legitimate worries about having to bear the costs of new government regulations.

Halloween traditions keep evil away

Fleeting figures slink through the darkness. Overhead, witches astride long black brooms crisscross the full, silver moon. Ghouls, goblins and fairies claw and scratch their way out of the deep, dark underworld. The air crawls with anticipation. It’s Halloween.

Ever wonder how this creepy tradition started?

Halloween dates back to the Celts, 5,000 years B.C. The Celts believed on this day the fairy mounds in Ireland opened and fairies and other supernatural beings from the underworld came up into their world.

No doubt this was a time of anxiety for the Celts who believe their world was being invaded. They attempted to keep these creatures at bay.

The villagers built huge bonfires. They took all the first fruits and first-born sons and sacrificed them – in an attempt to ward off evil spirits.

Black cats are one Halloween tradition alive today. These creatures are associated with Faust who sold his soul to the devil for knowledge and power.

A pumpkin or jack-o’-lantern is also a solid staple of Halloween. Jack-o’-lanterns also date back to the Irish and Scotch.

The pumpkin was the American replacement



John Schlageck

- Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

for the carved turnip of the Old World. After the Scotch and Irish sailed to this country, they carved a pumpkin instead.

Faces on the pumpkin were designed to keep spirits and other grotesque images from their door. A candle inside the jack-o’-lantern helped expel the darkness.

Orange and black remain the colors associated with Halloween. These same colors have long been linked with the dead.

Unbleached beeswax was used for candles surrounding caskets during the Middle Ages. The candles had an orangish buff color and of course black was always draped across the casket or hearse.

Blackness always conjures a deep fear in the human imagination. Darkness and evil are synonymous.



Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

