

Use The Scene to introduce “Making Wise Choices,” the High School Sunday school lesson for September 21, 2014. The lesson is found on page 17 of *High School Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

While everyone agrees that the job of schools is to teach, not everyone agrees on how the *amount* of learning is to be *measured*. Recently more and more school districts are rejecting the idea of giving state and national education assessment tests.

Last month Lee County (Florida) school board voted to discontinue assessment testing for their students. The next day, however, the board reversed its decision and reinstated testing. The reversal came after the Florida School Boards Association argued that opting out of state tests could affect state funding and even cause the state to refuse to issue diplomas to Lee County students.

Nevertheless, critics of standardized testing argue that school systems are putting too much of an emphasis on testing, leading to a “teach-to-the-test” culture. It is clear that the debate is far from over.

“The biggest and broadest [education] consensus is around the fact that kids are tested too much these days,” says Sabrina Stevens, a former teacher and founder of Integrity in Education, a pro-pupil education reform group. “At some point, there will be school boards who will vote to stop that testing. With the level of organizing that has already taken place, this is the next logical step. It’s inevitable that someone is going to do this.”

Other school districts are taking other actions against the tests. For example, Pittsburgh Public Schools announced last week that it is reducing the amount of time students in K–5 spend taking required tests this school year. In grades 3–5 the reduction amounts to 33 hours, equal to about more than five days of instructional time. Smaller reductions are being made in K–2, which already had less testing time.

“I think this is wonderful,” said Nina Esposito-Visgitis, president of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers.

“Teachers have complained for so long. This isn’t just in Pittsburgh. This is nationally. They spend so much time testing the kids, which takes away from instructional time. It adds to the stress of the kids.”

In a published editorial, Miami-Dade Public School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho asked Florida to reconsider all the testing. Carvalho urged the state to take a common-sense approach to testing.

“First, we need to recognize that assessment, as a legitimate tool of accountability, exists only to inform and improve the teaching and learning process. Its use beyond that most legitimate purpose lends itself to misinterpretation of results, erroneous conclusions, perversion of the system itself, and potential harm to students, teachers, schools, and communities.”

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

Do you have to take state assessment tests in your school? What do you think is the value of the tests? What problems do you think they could cause?

Other than for learning, what are some ways people are measured and tested. (for example, weight, blood pressure, eyesight, etc.) Why is it important that these be measured accurately?

Accurate evaluation helps us make important decisions. The Scriptures provide a measuring device to aid us in making wise choices. Let’s see how that works.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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