

the Evaluator

Educational Records Bureau

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A New Year Brings a New Opportunity

By Sid Barish

At the beginning of each school year as a teacher or principal I always looked forward to buying something new to wear and getting a haircut to honor the opportunity the new year promised. And just like the students who would be arriving on the first day of school, I awoke with the proverbial butterflies in my stomach.

I think when you care very much about something you get nervous about doing it right. Since there is no work more noble than teaching, who should be more nervous about getting things right than teachers and school administrators? New York Times writer and author Thomas L. Friedman underscored this point when describing the graduation ceremony for his daughter held at Williams College last June.

In addition to granting honorary degrees, Williams also honors four high school teachers who were nominated by members of its senior class as people who had a profound impact on their lives. At the graduation weekend, the teachers and their families are flown to Williams and honored as part of the celebration. Without fail, one or more of the honorees announces to the president of the college that it is one of the most special events of their lives.

Who could imagine anything more special for a teacher? When you enter a profession committed to the mission to inspire,

nurture, and develop young minds, nothing is more gratifying than recognition from your students that your work was valued and appreciated.

I offer this message at the beginning of the school year so as to remind all who work in schools that your impact on the life of a child can be momentous and unforgettable. The challenges that teachers face are daunting at a time in which the jobs kids will work at may not yet have been invented. The best preparation



Williams College 2005 Honorary degree recipients, left to right: Evelyn Glennie, Joseph Rice, Julian Bond, Jhumpa Lahiri, resident Schapiro, Ellsworth Kelly, Thomas Friedman, and Sally Shaywitz

for these uncertain times is the ability to learn how to learn. This is where the role of the teacher takes on its most important stage.

As all fine teachers know, the best way for students to learn how to

learn is to love to learn. Students must be taught not just to handle ambiguity, but to welcome it. When students view challenges as opportunities to achieve new levels of mastery, then they are on the road to becoming lifelong learners, that is, those who love to learn. Most students who love to learn have one thing in common: teachers who inspire them.

With the start of a new school year comes the promise that each new challenge will bring its own reward. That reward will no doubt come in the shape of valiant teachers imbued with the desire to enrich the lives of students every day in every way possible. Good luck on this year's journey.

R. Bruce McGill, Former ERB President, 84



Dr. R. Bruce McGill

We at ERB were deeply saddened by the news that R. Bruce McGill, former President of ERB, died on January 1, in Boston. He was 84 and lived in Westwood, Mass. Dr. McGill was the father of Dr. Michael V. McGill, Superintendent of the Scarsdale Public School District.

A former school superintendent, Dr. McGill was president of the Educational Records Bureau for 16 years starting in 1972. Under his leadership, ERB sought to measure more than the basic skills gauged by state-mandated exams. Dr. McGill led the development of assessments that inform instruction, curriculum, and staff development, which are used widely by independent and public schools.

Under Dr. McGill's leadership, ERB introduced the Independent School Entrance Examination, an admission test for entrance into grades 5 through 12, and the Comprehensive Testing Program, a series of achievement

tests now administered to 260,000 students each year. During his tenure, Dr. McGill believed that it was the inescapable duty of teachers and the whole educational establishment to use assessments and all other data about each individual child in the same manner that a good medical practitioner uses medical tests - for the benefit of the patient - rather than to "pass" or "fail" a student.

Raymon Bruce McGill was born in Andover, N.Y., on March 21, 1920, and graduated from Alfred University in 1941. He received a master's degree from New York University and later earned a doctorate in education. He was principal of Edgemont High School in Scarsdale and the Robert E. Bell School in Chappaqua, N.Y. He was later superintendent of schools in Wayland, Mass., for six years. While teaching at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, he wrote two science textbooks.

In addition to his son Michael, of Hartsdale, N.Y., Dr. McGill is survived by his wife, Katharine Newbury McGill; another son, David R., of Marlborough, Mass.; four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. His first wife, Elizabeth Vincent McGill, died in 1984.

A Field of Dreams OR

How the ISEE helped transform a soybean field into a college prep high school

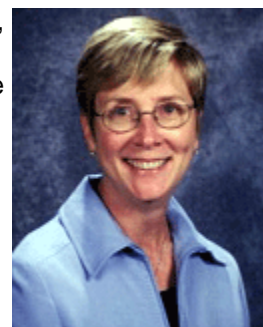
contributed by Nancy Webster, Director of Admission, University High School of Indiana

In the fall of 1999, I was faced with a daunting task-to serve as the founding admission director for a new school-University High School of Indiana. My husband had accepted the position as Head of School, and I was offered the role in admissions. Although invigorated and excited about the prospect of creating a school from the ground up, I was moderately overwhelmed. The mission statement was written, "To expand the hearts and minds of students and to nurture excellence through academic, creative and physical achievement," the curriculum was created to serve average through gifted high school students, and the program was designed to create a college preparatory high school where students were known and understood for who they are. My task was to create an admission process that was in line with our mission and purpose, and to attract those students to choose a start-up high school in the middle of a soybean field on 116th Street in Carmel, Indiana, and I remember feeling quite alone.

Like any good independent school person, I did some research, consulted colleagues in the field, and placed a call to Patrick Bassett, then President of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States. Although University was not yet an ISACS member school, Pat had consulted with our Board, and I was pleased when he

returned my call. Along with kind, encouraging words, Pat gave me a monumental piece of advice-he told me to contact the Educational Records Bureau and to consider using the Independent School Entrance Examination. I took his advice, and found at the ISEE willing advisors and colleagues to help me create my admission office. Long telephone conversations with the ISEE staff about the examination, admission procedures, and the challenge of being "new" enabled me to feel connected to the admission world.

Choosing the ISEE gave my start up school instant credibility. Specifically, using an independent school normed test helped parents and students see University High School as real. Picture this-in the first year as we were recruiting students and staff, I met with families in a small office provided to me by two of my trustees. Applicants and their parents perused the Student Guide and could see that this examination was used at some of the finest college preparatory schools in the country. My first class of 28 took the ISEE in that office complex-and had to envision four modular classrooms and two renovated farmhouses as their new high school.



Nancy Webster

ERB Annual Conference Just Around the Corner

We are very excited to announce that our ERB fall lineup has been confirmed. An impressive roster of speakers and topics awaits you at the October conference. This year's theme is "**Leading & Teaching Our Next 'Great Generation,'**" and we are certain that you will leave the conference feeling positive and re-energized about your students, your school, and your profession.

The Tuesday keynote speaker, **William Strauss**, will talk to you about the "Millenials" that comprise your student body, and the "Good News Revolution" that you should be aware of. According to Mr. Strauss, these are students the likes of which we haven't seen in two generations. Theme speakers such as **Peter Cobb, Renee Cherow-O'Leary, Deborah Stipek, and Marilee Jones** will provide strategies and tips on how best to tap into the minds of this remarkable generation, and get them to live up to their full potential and promise. To round out our conference theme, Wednesday keynoter **David Whyte** will further encourage you to strive for new frontiers in your personal and professional lives through "Courageous Conversation."



Some of the other educators and authors that we have lined up this year include **Sandra Timmons**, President of A Better Chance, **Drs. Michael McGill** and **Paul D. Folkemer** of the Scarsdale Public Schools, **Donna**

Anderson-Davis from the Center for Performance Assessment, and **Dr. Cleve Latham** of the McCallie School, just to name a few. A full conference brochure is available on our website at www.erbtest.org/pages/conf2005.

In addition to our stellar conference program, we also have a number of workshops and networking opportunities for you to take advantage of while in New York. If you are in town on Monday evening, and have no dinner plans, you can sign up for our **Dutch Treat Networking Suppers**, and dine with colleagues who have similar titles and duties to yours. Sign up for a free one-on-one **Consultation Clinic** with our expert test consultants, who will assist you with your scores for either CTP 4 or WrAP. (You can submit your request for a consultation online at the ERB conference website.) Enjoy our Broadway offering, "**Avenue Q,**" in a center orchestra seat. And be sure to mix and mingle with ERB staff and fellow attendees at our complimentary **Trustees' Wine and Cheese Reception** on Tuesday evening.



Rod, John Tartaglia, Nicky, Jennifer Barnhart and Rick Lyon

No matter what combination of events you attend, you are sure to return to your school with new ideas, materials, contacts, energy, and respect for your students, your colleagues, and your job. We can't wait to see you in the fall!

A Field of Dreams (con't)

The ISEE is a challenging instrument, with a writing component, and my applicants experienced some of the rigor and intellectual excitement that awaited them at "the new school" while sitting for the exam itself. Elizabeth Mangas, Executive Director of the ISEE, encouraged me to consider attending the fall ERB Conference. At my first conference, I learned from the finest admission directors about marketing, perseverance, and creativity. In the small group sessions where participants are encouraged to share, I would ask questions unique to me, and others reached out and gave wise counsel. Elizabeth herself welcomed me personally to that first conference (and every one since then) and subsequently has visited the Indianapolis area on two occasions. She shows genuine enthusiasm in watching our campus grow (we now have a wonderful main building, soccer fields and a tennis complex!) and applauds our growing student body-150 students strong this year.

Having graduated two senior classes and now beginning our seventh school year, I ask myself, "Would University High School be where it is today without the ISEE?" Honestly, I am not certain. I suppose a different instrument might have worked, but by choosing the ISEE, I not only chose a credible examination but also gained the support of an entire organization. From Tweedy Tattersall in North Carolina to Chandler Hopkins in NYC to Elizabeth in Columbus, Ohio, I feel surrounded by a group of professionals who are patient, thoughtful and respectful.

As I write this article, I am looking out the window of my office in this renovated 100 year-old farm house, with soybeans close by, and I feel wonderfully connected to admission colleagues everywhere. We serve a wide variety of students and face unique challenges, yet our mission to serve our students and their families - the mission we share with the ISEE professionals - connects us.

Using Test Scores to Guide Individual or Group Instruction

For standardized achievement test results to be most meaningful, teachers and administrators need to know how to interpret and use them to their best advantage for students. While teachers may find the sheer volume of information contained in test score reports overwhelming, a well-planned and patient approach to data analysis can help them focus on the key pieces of information from tests to guide instructional practice.

Clues on When to Revise Group Instruction

Classroom-level reports, such as a class roster or item analysis, provide information to inform decisions about the need to review or re-teach content with the whole class. Content areas or subtests in which high percentages of students are performing below average usually indicate areas of weakness or confusion. Once teachers have noted and prioritized those deficiencies, they may consider the following questions to guide their next steps:



- * Where is this content addressed in the curriculum?
- * At what point in the school are these concepts/skills taught?
- * What strategies or approaches are used to teach these concepts/skills?
- * In what ways are students required to demonstrate mastery of these skills?

Answers to these questions should help point the way to new methods of instruction, reinforcement, or assessment. They may also provide evidence that the curriculum and the tests are not in alignment. In such cases, the results can pave the way for curriculum development by helping to identify priority areas for this work.

The sequencing of content in the curriculum may be an important factor if standardized testing is done before some areas are taught. There is a big difference between low scores because something was not taught yet, as opposed to work that was taught but not learned well.

The approach that teachers take to teach concepts or skills is another important factor for them to consider when reviewing test results. It may be that the class did not grasp the content at first blush and the teacher may need to identify another way to explain the same information to help students understand it. In addition, it is also important for teachers to examine the performance standard expected for their students to demonstrate learning. If teacher-made tests assess learning against the same standards as the standardized achievement tests used by the school, then the scores on the combined assessments will provide valuable information to guide intervention strategies.

Teachers often want to know when to be concerned about a particular test outcome. A good rule of thumb is to identify the subtest(s) upon which a class achieves at a percentile rank below 50 for the norm group in the comparison. These content areas can then become targets for possible instructional work or changes. Another approach

teachers can take is to look at the skill areas in which high percentages of students scored in the bottom 25% (stanine 1-3) or low percentages of students in the top 25% (stanine 7-9). Here again, teachers should prioritize these areas for possible revision of instruction since they cannot change everything at once.

Designing Individual Intervention

Standardized test data can just as effectively be used to guide intervention strategies for individual students. In determining the need for such help, teachers should first examine raw score information in the various content areas covered by the test. Raw scores may be influenced by the content of test questions, the difficulty level of the questions, and the number of questions used to assess a skill. The fewer the number of items on a subtest, the less reliable the scores will be. For this reason, it is important for teachers to consider a number of things before making intervention decisions: raw

scores, percentile ranks, and the number of possible points assigned to a skill, to name a few.

The process for examining test results to guide the teacher's approach is essentially the same as for the whole class. First, the teacher identifies content area in which the student performed below average. Second, the teacher establishes priorities among these areas, focusing on one or two areas at a time. Third, the teacher identifies new or different resource materials, methods of instruction, reinforcement, and/or assessment to meet the needs of the



student. It makes little sense to re-teach work in the exact same way and with the same materials as before and expect a different outcome. The success of the interventions can be assessed through classroom tests and assignments as well as future standardized.

When standardized test results are used in conjunction with other work that students are doing daily at school, teachers will have excellent information to guide their work and enrich the learning experience of their students. To avoid being overwhelmed by data, teachers may want to begin their review by looking first at national norm comparisons (a true cross section of learners) and then move to the narrower field of learners whose achievement is closer to that of their students (independent or suburban public norm).

Interpreting standardized test scores takes practice. By limiting the data to be interpreted and taking the time to understand what those scores mean, teachers will be better able to bring about increased achievement. Just as healthy individuals step back and examine their lifestyles for personal improvement, healthy organizations need to do the same thing to stay sharp and focused.

Reference:
Using Standardized Test Data to Guide Instruction and Intervention.
ERIC Digest (2003). Mertler, Craig A.

Guide to Typical Terms Reported on Test Score Reports

Sometimes the titles of scores typically included on test reports can be confusing. Here is a guide to some of those frequently used score terms.

Standard (or "Scale")

Score (SS): A score that has been transformed mathematically and put on a scale to allow comparisons with different forms and levels of a test. It provides a quick view of growth and achievement from year to year.

Grade equivalent (GE)

Score: A norm-referenced score that indicates the grade and month of the school year for which a score is average. The average score for a fifth grader being tested in the seventh month of the school year, for example, would be 5.7. If a child has a GE of 9.1 on a reading test it doesn't mean that the child can do ninth grade work, but rather, that he or she scored the same as an average entering ninth grader would if the ninth grader took the fifth-grade test.

Percentile Rank (PR):

The percentage of students in the norm group that performed at or below a particular performance level. ERB offers suburban public and independent school norms in addition to a

national norm. While the national norm provides comparison to a sample of test-takers across the country, the suburban public and independent school norms offer comparisons to a more homogeneous, high performing group.

Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE):

A normalized standardized score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06 resulting in a near equal interval scale from 0-99. They allow you to compare the performance of students who take different levels or forms of the same test within a test battery; and they also permit comparisons across subject matter for the same student.

Stanine (S): Stanine scores range from 1 to 9, with a score of 5 representing the average. The percentage of scores at each stanine level in a normalized standard score scale is 4, 7, 12, 17, 20, 17, 12, 7, and 4, respectively. Percentile rank scores provide similar, though more precise, information. For example, a percentile rank near the middle of the distribution (e.g, 45 to 55) will be roughly equivalent to a stanine score of 5.

Typoglycemia (Is Spelling Important?)

All those years of schooling and it comes down to this Believe it or not, you can read it!

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*** Important Reminders ***

* This is the last year for Form 1 of the CTP 4 Constructed Response Questions! Please do not use CR Form 1 after the Spring of 2005, as the CR questions will not be scored!

* **2005-2006 Catalogs** have been mailed out to all member schools. If you have misplaced your catalog, or did not receive one, order forms can be found on our Web site, either under "Request A Catalog" or "Member Services."

* Please help us keep our contact information as up-to-date as possible. If there has been a change in your school's personnel, please fill out our online form at www.erbtest.org/pages/ERB_member.html

* Please be sure to keep your CTP 4 test items secure. Do not release them into anyone's care, and be sure to keep them in a locked cabinet until you are ready to test.

* **ERB Conference** - Monday October 17th - Wednesday October 19th. Go to www.erbtest.org/pages/conf2005 for more information!



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