

MY TURN

The Value of 'Value-Added' Teacher Scoring

By **TIM BROWN**

I am a teacher, and as you might imagine, a number of my friends, family and colleagues have asked me for my reaction to the LA Times "value added" statistical analysis of math and English scores to estimate teaching effectiveness.

I have also been asked whether I think it is appropriate to publish the information. I see these as two completely different issues, so I will first offer my opinion on assessing teaching effectiveness.

Teachers do not assemble products that have common characteristics. They cultivate the minds of human beings, which are extremely diverse. Objective measures (almost any statistical analysis) used in isolation can reasonably compare two or more things that are more alike than different. However, when you are talking about children whose intelligence, academic preparedness, cultural values, socioeconomic status, and health make it almost impossible to determine what is typical, any measure used by itself to estimate performance will produce, at the very least, an inconclusive result and at worst misleading information.

For example, it is common to find students with varying reading ability within a single school and possibly within a single classroom. A student in fifth grade who reads at the sixth grade level will not advance as far in one year as a student who may be in the same school or classroom but who starts at the second grade level.

This phenomenon distorts the difference between the projected performance and the actual performance crucial to calculating the "value" when comparing results.

Also, standardized tests of any kind are only one measure of student learning. For instance, many students experience test anxiety that is only amplified with the inflexible administration of a standardized test. Tension will inhibit performance on these. In addition, there are many physical and environmental factors that dramatically affect student learning that are completely out of the teacher's control, such as disability, nutrition, or abuse to name just a few.

To the second issue - whether parents should be made aware of the results of a reliable assessment of teacher performance - I believe they should be. We are able to gather performance information on other professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants - who, by the way, are not paid with public dollars.

In my view, there is no single responsibility an adult assumes that is more important than raising a child. Education is compulsory in our society and parents should be able to make informed choices about who will guide the learning of their children. Other than a child's parents, few people have the ability to influence the future of a child more than a teacher.

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Forum
COMMENTS, RANTS AND RAVES



INBOX
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Cable bills could fall as much as 13 percent if cable and satellite customers could choose the channels they want.

Why should we pay for what we would never use, such as Russia Today, The Golf Channel, Playboy, Cartoon Network?

And we want more control over what comes in our homes.

We are over-subscribed to pay for a host of channels we don't even watch.

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) will introduce legislation to get a la carte pricing.

Consumers Union praised McCain for "striking at the heart of the flawed pricing scheme."

Dr. Patricia Frostholt

(Re: "Just Some Harmless Fun," NBI, 8/27:)

Hooray, there is another intelligent responsible thinker in Orange County. Thank you for saying "CityHall/Civic Center/Taj Mahal/White Elephant/Dog Park with an Espresso Stand" so thoughtfully and cleverly regarding the Newport Beach City Council's irresponsible decision to proceed with the elephant. They said it was the perfect time to proceed because they can get the job done for 20 to 30 percent less in these hard economic times. Spending city money is easy in any economy.

Thanks for taking the time and energy to say what really needs to be said.

Lynn Lindsay

(Re: "...After All These Years," NBI, 8/27:)

In your article on longtime Newport res-

taurants you left out the place with the best burger in Newport Beach and most likely all of Orange County: Cassidy's Bar and Grill.

Brian Kleber

I have been enjoying The List. My kids and I sat around the dinner table and made just such a list about a year ago.

We also made a list of businesses that we love, like Alden's carpets and Mesa Auto Center.

One great restaurant was accidentally left off of your list of restaurants that are still in business. That restaurant is Amelia's on Balboa Island.

I love the Independent and share my copy with the Upper Newport Bay Interpretive Center staff every week. You have done a great job of covering events taking place there.

Thanks!

Andy Lingle

You guys forgot about Avila's El Ranchito! They have been on the Peninsula since the '70s and are still holding on really strong!

On another note, great local paper... I love reading it every Friday.

Bianca Avila

Here are two we think should be on your list!

1. The Chicken Coop
2. The Blue Beet

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