

Many years ago, before I taught high school English, I worked as a teacher-aide in an elementary, where I was assigned to help in testing kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade students on sound recognition. It was hugely time-consuming, taking children away from the very classrooms where these skills would be acquired over time in a meaningful context related to learning. As Kieran Egan points out in "Cognitive Tools of Children's Imagination," rhyme and sounds related to meaning provide such a context: eidetic words, those with a sequence of sounds that mimics actions, such as "mash," "splash," "bash," "mash," "smash," "dash," "flash," and "rash," give children a way of acting out those words. Adding to initial consonants helps students create new words: "sing," "sling," "swing," "sting." Allowing teachers time to develop lessons to support curricular goals has more value than pulling students out of their classrooms. Such actions diminish the authority of teachers, making them subservient to testing companies and politicians questioning whether tax-payer money is being well-spent. It is well spent as long as education is learning how to grow into the world. Once it becomes a way of measuring whether a child is successful, children lose interest in learning.

These children are too young to test

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