

MEASURING WHAT WE VALUE

I was part of an Educational Testing Service (ETS) workshop not too long ago in which Shirley Malcolm of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) raised the distinction between “Valuing what we Measure” and “Measuring what we Value.”

The Alliance we are working to get off the ground will be operating within Public Education Systems which “Value what they Measure.” However, within the Alliance, the Big Picture Learning (BPL) network, has pushed back to recruit public schools that are free to “Measure what they value.”

So why have some BPL schools joined the Alliance? Precisely because there is no consensus about what to value in the teaching and learning of mathematics that equips students for life and work in the 21st century. These BPL schools are hopeful that the Alliance will provide, if not solutions to this conundrum, structured opportunities to work on such solutions.

There is arguably no conundrum more central to the vision and work of the Alliance than the above. An enormous consequence of Public School Systems which operate to “Value what they Measure” is the contribution they make to the vastly overpopulated Federal, State and Local prisons.

Note, that during the era of the Korean and Vietnam wars, draft deferment tests, based on valuing what we measure, had consequences which reached into the central constitutional conundrum of the nation: 1787 to 1865: The Preamble’s Constitutional People (white men property owners) vs. Constitutional Property (African boys, girls, women and men) of Article 4 section 2 paragraph 3.

1875 to 1965: De facto first class constitutional citizens (white protestant people of European descent) vs. de jure/de facto second class constitutional citizens (African, Asian, Latinx, Native Americans as well as Jewish and Catholic Americans)

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*The cutoff score on the draft deferment test was 70. While 73% of college students in New England made the cutoff, only 42% of “Southerners” made the cutoff. The news was never “leaked”. (Nicolas Lemann, *The Big Test (the secret history of the American Meritocracy)*, p.72 - 79)*

This concept paper is a call for all participants in the Alliance to articulate one or two things they value and which they think should be part of what the Alliance also values. It is also a call for people who commit to collecting and circulate these statements and constitute themselves as a committee to report their findings to the Alliance when it next assembles.

I am reminded that Joseph Hovater from the BPL stated more than once that what he values and sees as what BPL also values is “Identity and Vision.”

—Bob Moses, the Algebra Project, Cambridge, MA –May 22, 2017