

Support the PISA Letter

OPEN LETTER TO ANDREAS SCHLEICHER, OECD, PARIS

TO SUPPORT THE LETTER CLICK [HERE](#).

TO SEE THE GROWING LIST OF RECENT SIGNATORIES (SINCE MAY 6) CLICK [HERE](#).

TO LEAVE A COMMENT CLICK THE 'REPLIES' BUTTON ABOVE.

Recent additional signatories include:

Alfie Kohn (Author and Lecturer);

Robin Alexander (Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Cambridge);

Noam Chomsky (Institute Professor, MIT, rtd);

Juergen Boehm, President of German Realschul- Teacher Association;

Paweł Kasprzak, OFF-Foundation, Poland;

OPEN LETTER TO ANDREAS SCHLEICHER, OECD, PARIS

Dear Dr. Schleicher:

We write to you in your capacity as OECD's director of the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA).

Now in its 13th year, PISA is known around the world as an instrument to rank OECD and non-OECD countries (60+ at last count) according to a measure of academic achievement of 15 year old students in mathematics, science, and reading. Administered every three years, PISA results are anxiously awaited by governments, education ministers, and the editorial boards of newspapers, and are cited authoritatively in countless policy reports. They have begun to deeply influence educational practices in many countries. As a result of PISA, countries are overhauling their education systems in the hopes of improving their rankings. Lack of progress on PISA has led to declarations of crisis and "PISA shock" in many countries, followed by calls for resignations, and far-reaching reforms according to PISA precepts.

We are frankly concerned about the negative consequences of the PISA rankings. These are some of our concerns:

- while standardized testing has been used in many nations for decades (despite serious reservations about its validity and reliability), PISA has contributed to an escalation in such testing and a dramatically increased reliance on quantitative measures. For example, in the United States, PISA has been invoked as a major justification for the recent "Race to the Top" program, which has increased the use of standardized testing for student-, teacher-, and administrator evaluations, which rank and label students, as well as teachers and administrators according to the results of tests widely known to be imperfect (see, for example, Finland's unexplained decline from the top of the PISA table);
 - in education policy, PISA, with its three-year assessment cycle, has caused a shift of attention to short-term fixes designed to help a country quickly climb the rankings, despite research showing that enduring changes in education practice take decades, not a few years to come to fruition. For example, we know that the status of teachers and the prestige of teaching as a profession has a strong influence on the quality of instruction, but that status varies strongly across cultures and is not easily influenced by short-term policy;
 - by emphasizing a narrow range of measurable aspects of education, PISA takes attention away from the less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic, and artistic development, thereby dangerously narrowing our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about;
 - as an organization of economic development, OECD is naturally biased in favor of the economic role of public schools. But preparing young men and women for gainful employment is not the only, and not even the main goal of public education, which has to prepare students for participation in democratic self-government, moral action, and a life of personal development, growth, and well-being;
 - unlike United Nations (UN) organizations such as UNESCO or UNICEF that have clear and legitimate mandates to improve education and the lives of children around the world, OECD has no such mandate. Nor are there, at present, mechanisms of effective democratic participation in its education decision-making process;
 - to carry out PISA and a host of follow-up services, OECD has embraced "public-private partnerships" and entered into alliances with multi-national for-profit companies, which stand to gain financially from any deficits—real or perceived—unearthed by PISA. Some of these companies provide educational services to American schools and school districts on a massive, for-profit basis, while also pursuing plans to develop for-profit elementary education in Africa, where OECD is now planning to introduce the PISA program;
 - finally, and most importantly: the new PISA regime, with its continuous cycle of global testing, harms our children and impoverishes our classrooms, as it inevitably involves more and longer batteries of multiple-choice testing, more scripted "vendor"-made lessons, and less autonomy for our teachers. In this way PISA has further increased the already high stress-level in our schools, which endangers the well-being of our students and teachers.
- These developments are in overt conflict with widely accepted principles of good educational and democratic practice:
- no reform of any consequence should be based on a single narrow measure of quality;
 - no reform of any consequence should ignore the important role of non-educational factors, among which a nation's socio-economic inequality is paramount. In many countries, including the United States, inequality has dramatically increased over the past 15 years, explaining the widening educational gap between rich and poor which education reforms, no matter how sophisticated, are unlikely to redress;

-an organization like OECD, as any organization that deeply affects the life of our communities, should be open to democratic accountability by members of those communities.

We are writing not only to point out deficits and problems. We would also like to offer constructive ideas and suggestions that may help to alleviate the above mentioned concerns. While in no way complete, they illustrate how learning could be improved without the above mentioned negative effects:

-develop alternatives to league tables: explore more meaningful and less easily sensationalized ways of reporting assessment outcomes. For example, comparing developing countries, where 15-year olds are regularly drafted into child labor, with first world countries makes neither educational nor political sense and opens OECD up for charges of educational colonialism;

-make room for participation by the full range of relevant constituents and scholarship: to date, the groups with greatest influence on what and how international learning is assessed are psychometricians, statisticians, and economists. They certainly deserve a seat at the table, but so do many other groups: parents, educators, administrators, community leaders, students, as well as scholars from disciplines like anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, linguistics, as well as the arts and humanities. What and how we assess the education of 15 year old students should be subject to discussions involving all these groups at local, national, and international levels;

-include national and international organizations in the formulation of assessment methods and standards whose mission goes beyond the economic aspect of public education and which are concerned with the health, human development, well-being and happiness of students and teachers. This would include the above mentioned United Nations organizations, as well as teacher, parent, and administrator associations, to name a few;

-publish the direct and indirect costs of administering PISA so that taxpayers in member countries can gauge alternative uses of the millions of dollars spent on these tests and determine if they want to continue their participation in it;

-welcome oversight by independent international monitoring teams which can observe the administration of PISA from the conception to the execution, so that questions about test format and statistical and scoring procedures can be weighed fairly against charges of bias or unfair comparisons;

-provide detailed accounts regarding the role of private, for-profit companies in the preparation, execution, and follow-up to the tri-annual PISA assessments to avoid the appearance or reality of conflicts of interest;

-slow down the testing juggernaut. To gain time to discuss the issues mentioned here at local, national, and international levels, consider skipping the next PISA cycle. This would give time to incorporate the collective learning that will result from the suggested deliberations in a new and improved assessment model.

We assume that OECD's PISA experts are motivated by a sincere desire to improve education. But we fail to understand how your organization has become the global arbiter of the means and ends of education around the world. OECD's narrow focus on standardized testing risks turning learning into drudgery and killing the joy of learning. As PISA has led many governments into an international competition for higher test scores, OECD has assumed the power to shape education policy around the world, with no debate about the necessity or limitations of OECD's goals. We are deeply concerned that measuring a great diversity of educational traditions and cultures using a single, narrow, biased yardstick could, in the end, do irreparable harm to our schools and our students.

Sincerely,

Heinz-Dieter Meyer (State University of New York)

and

Katie Zahedi (Principal, Linden Ave Middle School, Red Hook, New York)

SIGNATORIES AS OF MAY 4, 2014

Signatories as of May 4, 2014:

Andrews, Paul- Professor of Mathematics Education, Stockholm University

Atkinson, Lori – New York State Allies for Public Education

Baldermann, Ingo, Professor of Protestant Theology and Didactics, Universität Siegen, Germany

Ball, Stephen J. – Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education, Institute of Education, University of London

Barber, Melissa – Parents Against High Stakes Testing

Beckett, Lori – Winifred Mercier Professor of Teacher Education, Leeds Metropolitan University

Bender, Peter – Professor, Fakultät für Elektrotechnik, Informatik und Mathematik, Universität Paderborn, Germany

Berardi, Jillaine – Linden Avenue Middle School, Assistant Principal

Berliner, David – Regents Professor of Education at Arizona State University

Bloom, Elizabeth – EdD, Associate Professor of Education, Hartwick College

Boland, Neil – Senior Lecturer, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

Boudet, Danielle – Oneonta Area for Public Education

Burchardt, Matthias – Academic Council; Society for Education and Knowledge, Vice-Chair, Cologne University, Germany

Burris, Carol – Principal and former Teacher of the Year, Co-Founder of New York Principals.

Cauthen, Nancy – Ph.D., Change the Stakes, NYS Allies for Public Education

Cerrone, Chris – Testing Hurts Kids; NYS Allies for Public Education

Ciaran, Sugrue – Professor, Head of School, School of Education, University College Dublin

Conneely, Claire – Programmes Director, Bridge21, Trinity College Dublin.

Danner, Helmut – Private Docent, Nairobi, Kenya

Deutermann, Jeanette – Founder Long Island Opt Out, Co-founder NYS Allies for Public Education

Devine, NESTA – Associate Professor, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
Dodge, Arnie – Chair, Department of Educational Leadership, Long Island University
Dodge, Judith – Author, Educational Consultant
Farley, Tim – Principal, Ichabod Crane School; New York State Allies for Public Education.
Fehlmann, Ralph – Coordinator, Forum for General Education, Switzerland
Fellicello, Stacia – Principal, Chambers Elementary School
Fleming, Mary – Lecturer, School of Education, National University of Ireland, Galway
Fransson, Göran – Associate Professor of Education, University of Gävle, Sweden.
Giroux, Henry – Professor of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University
Glass, Gene – Senior Researcher, National Education Policy Center, University of Colorado at Boulder.
Glynn, Kevin – Educator, co-founder of Lace to the Top
Goldstein, Harvey – Professor of Social Statistics, University of Bristol
Gorlewski, David – Director, Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, D’Youville College.
Gorlewski, Julie – PhD, Assistant Professor, State University of New York at New Paltz
Gowie, Cheryl – Professor of Education, Siena College
Greene, Kiersten – Assistant Professor of Literacy, State University of New York at New Paltz
Gruschka, Andreas – Professor, Educational Sciences, Goethe Universität Frankfurt, Germany
Haimson, Leonie – Parent Advocate and Director of “Class Size Matters”
Hannon, Cliona – Director, Trinity Access Programmes, Trinity College Dublin
Heinz, Manuela – Director of Teaching Practice, School of Education, National University of Ireland Galway
Hoefele, Joachim – Department of Applied Linguistics, University for Applied Sciences, Zurich, Switzerland
Hopmann, Stefan Thomas – Professor, Institute for Educational Sciences, Universität Wien
Hughes, Michelle – Principal, High Meadows Independent School
Jahnke, Thomas – Institute of Mathematics, Universität Potsdam, Germany
Jury, Mark – Chair, Education Department, Siena College
Kahn, Hudson Valley Against Common Core
Kastner, Marie-Theres – President of League of Catholic Parents, Germany
Kayden, Michelle – LOTE Teacher, Linden Avenue Middle School Red Hook, NY
Kempf, Arlo – Program Coordinator of School and Society, OISE, University of Toronto
Kilfoyle, Marla – NBCT, General Manager of BATs
Kissling, Beat – Psychologist and Education Science, Gymnasium and University Instructor, Zürich, Switzerland
Klein, Hans Peter – Chair, Didactics of Bio-Sciences, Goethe Universität Frankfurt
Kraus, Josef – German Teacher Association, President, Germany
Krautz, Jochen – Professor, Department of Art and Design, Bergische Universität Wuppertal
Labaree, David – Professor of Education, Stanford University
Lankau, Ralf – Professor, Media Design, Hochschule Offenburg, Germany
Leonardatos, Harry – Principal, High School, Clarkstown, NY
Liesner, Andreas – Professor, Educational Sciences, Universität Hamburg
Liessmann, Konrad Paul – Professor, Institut für Philosophie, Universität Wien
MacBeath, John – Professor Emeritus, Director of Leadership for Learning, University of Cambridge
McLaren, Peter – Distinguished Professor, Chapman University
McNair, Jessica – Co-founder Opt-Out CNY, parent member NYS Allies for Public Education
Meyer, Heinz-Dieter – Associate Professor, Education Governance & Policy, State University of New York (Albany)
Meyer, Tom – Associate Professor of Secondary Education, State University of New York at New Paltz
Millham, Rosemary – Ph. D., Science Coordinator, Master Teacher Campus Director, SUNY New Paltz
Millham, Rosemary – Science Coordinator/Assistant Professor, Master Teacher Campus Director, State University of New York, New Paltz
Oliveira Andreotti, Vanessa – Canada Research Chair in Race, Inequality, and Global Change, University of British Columbia, Canada
Mitchell, Ken – Lower Hudson Valley Superintendents Council
Mucher, Stephen – Director, Bard Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Los Angeles
Naison, Mark – Professor of African American Studies and History, Fordham University; Co-Founder, Badass Teachers Association
Muench, Richard – Professor of Sociology, Universitaet Bamberg
Nielsen, Kris – Author, Children of the Core
Noddings, Nel – Professor (emerita) Philosophy of Education, Stanford University
Noguera, Pedro – Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education, New York University
Nunez, Isabel – Associate Professor, Concordia University, Chicago
O’Toole-Brennan, Kathleen – Programmes Manager, Trinity Access Programmes, Trinity College Dublin
Pallas, Aaron – Arthur I. Gates Professor of Sociology and Education, Columbia University
Parmentier, Michael – Museum Pedagogy, Göttingen, Germany
Peters, Michael – Professor, University of Waikato, Honorary Fellow, Royal Society New Zealand
Pongratz, Ludwig – Professor, Institute for Pedagogy, Technische Universitaet Darmstadt, Germany

Pugh, Nigel – Principal, Richard R Green High School of Teaching, New York City
 Radtke, F.O. – Professor (em), Education Sciences, Goethe-Universitaet Frankfurt
 Ravitch, Diane – Research Professor, New York University
 Reitz, Tilman – Junior Professor, Sociology, Universitaet Jena
 Rekus, Juergen – Institute for Vocational and General Pedagogy, Karlsruhe Institute for Technology (KIT), Germany
 Rivera-Wilson, Jerusalem – Senior Faculty Associate and Director of Clinical Training and Field Experiences, University at Albany
 Roberts, Peter – Professor, School of Educational Studies and Leadership, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.
 Rogle, Eija – Instructor, SUNY Albany
 Rudley, Lisa – Director: Education Policy-Autism Action Network
 Saltzman, Janet – Science Chair, Physics Teacher, Red Hook High School
 Schirlbauer, Alfred – Professor, Institute for Education Sciences, University of Vienna, Austria
 Schniedewind, Nancy – Professor of Education, Suny New Paltz
 Schopf, Heribert – Professor, School of Pedagogics and Education, Vienna, Austria
 Silverberg, Ruth – Associate Professor, College of Staten Island – CUNY
 Sperry, Carol – Professor of Education, Emerita, Millersville University
 Sjøberg, Svein – Professor (em), Science Education, University of Oslo, Norway
 Spring, Joel – Professor, Education Policy, City University of New York
 St. John, Edward – Algo D. Henderson Collegiate Professor, University of Michigan
 Suzuki, Daiyu – Teachers College at Columbia University / Co-founder Edu 4
 Swaffield, Sue – Senior Lecturer, Educational Leadership and School Improvement, University of Cambridge
 Tangney, Brendan – Associate Professor, School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin
 Tanis, Bianca – Parent Member: ReThinking Testing
 Thomas, Paul – Associate Professor of Education, Furman University
 Thrupp, Martin – Professor of Education, University of Waikato
 Tobin, KT – Founding member, ReThinking Testing
 Tomlinson, Sally – Emeritus Professor, Goldsmiths College, University of London; Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education, Oxford University
 Tuck, Eve – Coordinator of Native American Studies, State University of New York at New Paltz
 VanSlyke-Briggs, Kjersti – Associate Professor, SUNY Oneonta
 Vohns, Andreas – Associate Professor of Mathematics Education, School of Education, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt
 Wilson, Elaine – Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
 Wittmann, Erich – Professor of Mathematics Education, Technical University of Dortmund
 Wrigley, Terry – Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University of Ballarat, Australia
 Zahedi, Katie – Principal, Linden Ave Middle School, Red Hook, New York
 Zhao, Yong – Professor of Education, Presidential Chair, University of Oregon
ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES AS OF MAY 6, 2014
 Bogdanov, Alexander – Ph.D., Teacher of Mathematics and Physics, Ricarda Huch High School, Brunswick, Germany
 Böhm, Jürgen – Vorsitzender des Verbandes Deutscher Realschullehrer
 Brell, Andrea, Studiendirektor, Herder-Gymnasium Minden
 Brinkmann, Malte- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, General education/philosophy of education, Institute of Educational Studies
 Dammer, Karl-Heinz, Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg
 Damscheuser, Axel; teacher at Melanchthon-Schule Steinatal, Hessen, Germany
 Dartenne, Corinna Maria, Academic Assistant, Leuphana University Lüneburg
 Gerwig, Mario, Vorstand des Vereins LEHRKUNST, Switzerland
 Graupe, Silja, Chair of Economics and Philosophy, Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences
 Greve, Astrid, OStRin, Evangelisches Gymnasium Siegen
 Hackl, Bernhard, Univ.-Prof. Mag.art. Dr.phil., Institut fuer Schulpädagogik, Universitaet Graz, Austria
 Hedtke, Reinhold – Bielefeld University, Faculty of Sociology
 Heuck, Matthias, Lehrer, Darmstadt
 Kammasch, Gudrun, Professor, Beuth Hochschule für Technik Berlin
 Lind, Georg, Professor (em) University of Konstanz.
 Maset, Pierangelo, Professor, Institut für Kunst, Musik und ihre Vermittlung, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg
 Meidinger, Heinz-Peter – Vorsitzender des Deutschen Philologenverbandes
 Scheurl, Walter, 1. Vorsitzender des Vereins “Wir wollen lernen!”, Hamburg
 Schwaetzer, Harald, Kueser Akademie für Europäische Geistesgeschichte, Bernkastel-Kues
 Sowa, Hubert, Professor, Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg, Fach Kunst
 Uhlig, Bettina – Stiftung Universität Hildesheim, Institut für Bildende Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft
 Von Garrel, Magda, Sonderpädagogin und Autorin, Berlin