

Standardized Testing Gone Wrong

Teachers spend countless hours preparing students for the annual standardized testing. Then, they undermine all of their efforts by giving the students chemicals guaranteed to scramble their brain cells!

Jane wrote a message on our member's Facebook, "You may remember that I posted a picture the other day of all of the treats my son was given at school during standardized testing. The school gave the children dyed, artificial, corn syrup-sweetened garbage BEFORE the tests, to help motivate and encourage (eye roll). Well, here's where it gets good — my very good friend is the Superintendent of the entire school district. When I saw him over the weekend I mentioned it to him, and my son chimed in about how bad it was to sit there while all the kids ate Nerds and Airheads.

"The Superintendent just called me to say the school will never do this again and that he just added it to the agenda for the summer sessions with all of the administrators of the school. He also asked me for some research that he could share with the teachers and administrators.

"This is an awesome opportunity for my children's school district and the children who go there!"

Truth in labeling — names like "Airheads" and "Dum Dums" describe how junk candy affects kids.

Angela told about her 9-year-old daughter's experience. "I am so angry today! Her teacher messaged me Friday saying she had to pause her state testing because my girl was all over the place, not able to pay attention, writing on herself and the desk, fidgeting with everything. So here I am, racking my brain, trying to figure out what went wrong. Fast forward two days, doing laundry and I pull out candy wrappers from the pocket of the hoodie my daughter wore that day. I found out her teacher handed her candy before the test. We have had so much trouble this year with this teacher giving her unapproved food and she just never seems to get it.



Schools can score high in standardized tests by providing nourishment in place of junk.

Here is a link to studies showing how damaging certain synthetic additives are: <http://feingold.org/resources/studies>. When you talk with professionals, be sure to provide this link or other materials that are available from FAUS.

(I gave the teacher acceptable candy the last time we had this discussion, and I even had to contact the school counselor.) So I got angry and messaged the teacher, who first insisted that she is following my wishes and gave my daughter the acceptable candy. Then she claimed, "Oh, well she must be getting it from other students," and then she said she had another student hand out candy before the test and my daughter must have gotten it from her. She went on to say my daughter ate one piece, and then she (the teacher) took the rest away when the testing began.

"I believe my kid, and this teacher keeps changing her story. I've made it clear that she isn't to feed her at all, and she swears that she is following my wishes, basically claiming my girl is lying or taking food from other kids. Usually, my girl fesses up right away when she has gone off diet, and she is insisting the teacher gave it to her."

Standardized Testing, from page 1

Back in the 1990s, *Pure Facts* published the story of a remarkable school principal, Al Bullock. He was assigned to Gordon Middle School, located in a desperately poor area of Philadelphia, where the students scored at the bottom in their district.

Al used food as one of the ways to connect with the children and their families. He got families on board to send in healthy snacks, and the students were happy that they were free to eat in class if they got hungry. When the students and teachers jointly approved the kinds of food that were available, candy and gum virtually disappeared.

Then the home ec teachers, supported by the nurse and physical ed teachers, decided to offer snacks to students during breaks when they were taking mandatory state tests — the very tests that ranked this student body at the bottom of the scoring range. Weeks of preparation and encouragement included the idea that the students were going to be “fueled for success.”



Al wrote, “Their teachers and I served them fruit juice and high energy snacks prepared in our home ec kitchens as material evidence that their test performance held the same value as scoring a touchdown, making that game-winning goal, or coming out on top in a championship game.

“Six weeks later when the test results arrived from the state scoring center, the results were staggering. Not only had our kids scored at the top among our three district junior highs, but placed second among junior highs in the county and ranked among the top ten percent in the state! A new attitude for success was born in this impoverished inner-city middle school that was repeated for the next three years.

“The school drew accolades from our Pennsylvania Department of Education, naming Gordon a Blue Ribbon School — one of the best 200 secondary schools in the U.S. during 1992—1993.”

Teaching your child’s teacher... and the whole class

One mom reported, “My daughter’s birthday was coming up and I wanted to send in a special treat to school.”

She wrote, “I found an awesome recipe on Pinterest for vanilla bean cupcakes, and made Salted Caramel Vanilla Bean Cupcakes with peanut butter surprise centers.

“It’s so funny when we have things like this. The other kids know she can’t have the ‘good stuff’ so they think she is going to bring in fruit or something like that. Instead, she shows up with cake pops and bright pink (beet juice) marshmallow whipped icing with Italian cream inside (awesome easy recipe on Pinterest). Her classmates think she just brought it in for the other kids and when she starts to eat one they freak out, but Gigi tells them the treats are all-natural, and everyone is amazed. I always send in about 15 extra for her to hand out to the staff and other teachers. They want to know HOW I did this and want the recipe. It’s so much fun because as soon as 12:30 comes I know the emails and texts will start!”

Healthy snacks are the best option, but when you are dealing with people who don’t understand the Feingold concept, it can be very useful to show them that the first step is to simply replace the artificially dyed and flavored treats with natural versions.

Is your child’s school a Blue Ribbon School?

The Feingold Association has many resources for parents and educators who want to see the type of changes that took place at the Gordon Middle School in Pennsylvania. The Teacher’s Packet, located in the Member’s Section of our website, is a great place to begin. Then, check out the Science Fair experiments our children have done — these are dramatic examples of what happens when animals and plants are exposed to harmful chemicals. Finally, visit www.School-Lunch.org for lots of practical ideas.