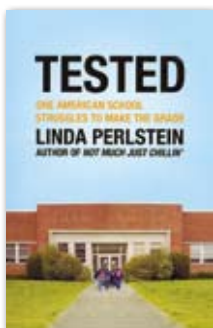


Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade

by Linda Perlstein, Henry Holt and Co., New York, N.Y., 2007, 320 pp., \$25 hardcover, \$16 softcover



Author Linda Perlstein reports, in an engaging format, on one elementary school's prevailing culture as defined by No Child Left Behind. Her work *Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade*

details the impact of mandated assessments on the lives of students and staff over the course of a full school year.

A veteran education reporter formerly with *The Sun* in Baltimore, Md., Perlstein observes the interactions between the principal and her teachers, as well as between teachers and students. What her investigation reveals is the stress not only of the professionals but also the students themselves as they struggle to achieve adequate yearly progress. And what Perlstein points out is the loss of natural curiosity and creativity among the students as teachers manage instruction within the narrow confines of a state assessment.

There is one especially revealing scene in the book during a school assembly. For most of us, assemblies inform through entertainment, addressing issues as diverse as drug abuse to the wonders of science experiments. Regardless of their topic, they tend to focus on expanding a child's knowledge. Perlstein describes a very different assembly — one whose defining purpose is to motivate the students to do their best on the upcoming state-mandated test that will lead to official judgments about the quality of their school.

Though school districts might not glean anything particularly new from this book, *Tested* serves as a reminder of what students, teachers and principals deal with daily. It should be required reading for everyone in the U.S. Congress to showcase the unintended consequences of passing legislation without engaging the very communities for which it is intended.

Reviewed by Marc Space, superintendent, Putnam Valley Central Schools, Putnam Valley, N.Y.