

# PRESS RELEASE



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## MORE THAN A TEST SCORE

“Public Education” is on the lips of every politician, during every election cycle. Yet, the debate continues. It is doing well, it is doing poorly, it needs reform, whatever the narrative needs to be that day or what the audience wants to hear.

Well, there are three sides to every story: “Yours, mine, and the cold, hard truth,” like the old Don Henley song reminds us. Out of the roughly 55.5 million K-12 students in America, 49.5 million of them are in our public schools, which is a little over 89%. If you visit a public education classroom today, you would be amazed at what our educators do on a daily basis.

We must remind ourselves we are not producing components for an industrial and societal machine. We are educating children. We can all agree that an engaging and challenging education is the proven path to prosperity and a life-long love of learning. Teachers consistently tell us that “testing” and “preparing students for a test” are among their top concerns in our internal surveys.

It has long been acknowledged that a strong public educational system is essential not only to the successful functioning of a democracy, but also to its future. That system must provide all children with an equitable and exceptional education that prepares them for college, career and life.

Educators, themselves, must exercise a higher duty of care than most professionals. Teachers face exposure to liability much greater than does the average citizen. Nearly every day, teachers must deal with diverse laws related to issues such as child abuse, student discipline, negligence, defamation, student records and copyright infringement. And many politicians are more concerned with a test score that their children produce than the immeasurable impact that teachers may make on a child’s life.

Often educators must contend with the fact that students do not have a consistent source of high-quality, nutritious food, if they have food at all at home. Issues like hunger and poverty, like it or not, are not imagined and they are prevalent in classrooms and schools across the nation. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 15.3 million children under 18 in the United States live in households where they are unable to consistently access enough nutritious food necessary for a healthy life. These 8 states have statistically higher food insecurity rates than the US national average (14.6%): Arkansas (21.2%), Mississippi (21.1%), Texas (18.0%), **Tennessee (17.4%)**, North Carolina

### SUMMARY

*A teacher's job extends far beyond training students to perform well on tests, and there are many factors that influence student academic performance beyond a teacher's influence. During a high-profile election cycle it is especially important to impress on politicians the importance of addressing the issues that affect children's education beyond their activity in school.*



(17.3%), Missouri (16.9%), Georgia (16.6%), and Ohio (16.0%). More than 1 in 5 children is at risk of hunger. Among African-Americans and Latinos, it's 1 in 3 according to the USDA.

It is hard to focus on education when you are hungry. Poverty and hunger also lead to other health issues, which also go untreated. What other profession besides public education teacher is evaluated on their students' test scores, when students lack the basic necessities of life?

Steve Turner in his brilliant satirical poem "Creed" referenced the state of our culture, when he wrote prevailing illogical thought processes: "This is the fault of society. Society is the fault of conditions. Conditions are the fault of society." Seemingly educators bear the brunt of the outcomes of children, and society is a given a pass. The problems we confront are larger than the children walking through the school house door.

The solutions are more than a score on a test. So, when the next politician speaks about education when seeking your vote, ask them what their plans are to alleviate poverty and hunger in your community. That is much more important than test scores to a whole lot of families.

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