In his book, *The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better,* Daniel **Koretz** provides ample evidence to show that in the USA accountability based solely on test scores has failed badly and seriously damaged their educational system. He then presents nine principles for improvement and six practical steps for doing better. These are briefly outlined here, but readers are directed to his book for a full explanation of his ideas.

**Nine Principles for Improvement**

1 Pay attention not just to test scores but to broader competencies like a love of learning, the ability to collaborate, and to adapt knowledge and skill to new problems.

2 Evaluating schools means measuring student achievement and the practices of teachers plus the climate of classrooms.

3 Set reasonable targets that can be reached by legitimate means, *while exerting pressure to lessen inequalities in education.*  (Emphasis as in the original.)

4 “*Stop kicking the dog harder.*” Teachers need substantial support.

5 Don’t expect schools to do it all … poverty, absenteeism, schools with high rates of student turnover.

6 Pay attention to the context.

7 Accept the need for human judgement

8 Create incentives for educators to behave professionally at all times.

9 We have an ethical obligation to monitor, evaluate and revise all our interventions.

**Six Ways of Doing Better**

1 Measure what matters: student achievement, teachers’ practices, classroom climate, and non-cognitive skills that can’t be captured by tests eg enthusiasm for learning, working well in small groups etc

2 Measure the above well. Unrelenting pressure to raise scores has dominated schooling and corrupted the very notion of good teaching. Undoing the damage will be both time-consuming, difficult and expensive. Raise scores by better teaching. The evaluators will need to be trained.

3 Build a sensible system of accountability eg reasonable targets for both the amount of improvement expected and the time taken to accomplish it.

4 Use tests sensibly by making them less predictable and treating test scores as the starting point rather than the end of evaluation.

5 Provide support for teachers eg better initial and in-service training; in-school support such as smaller classes; out-of-school support like high quality preschool provision. This will be expensive and labour intensive.

6 Monitor and make mid-course corrections,

*Final words.*

The roots of the failures of American education go right to the top to politicians and policy-makers.

Don’t over-promise and under-deliver.

Remain humble about what progress is possible.

The ideas above will be difficult to implement and will be expensive. Progress will be slow because of the time it will take to repair the damage that has been done.

Koretz, D (2017) *The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.