

It's time to start listening to our teachers

School teachers represent one of the most underappreciated groups in our society.

At the same time, they are also one of the most criticized. According to an article Monday in the Daily News, "Bill Gates holds sway on education policy," our schools are failing and teachers are primarily to blame.

This is nonsense.

A recent study published in Education Week found that 40 percent of our nation's 4 million public school teachers are "disheartened" about their jobs.

The study reported that most teachers feel that there is too much emphasis placed on standardized testing in our schools — to the point that it is significantly interfering with the learning process for many students.

We need to be listening to teachers about this issue — they are absolutely correct. Far from being part of the solution, our obsession with standardized testing is actually one of the reasons we are behind other countries in educational attainment.

Standardized testing does not make teachers more "accountable." The irrational confidence many place in test scores is way out of proportion to what the instruments actually tell us.

Moreover, our societal fixation on

standardized tests distracts from the educational process, instills fear in everyone associated with education and will ultimately prove to be counterproductive to our long-term viability as a nation.

A large percentage of teachers work in low income schools, which makes their jobs much more difficult for a number of reasons, including the fact that students from lower socio-economic families consistently score lower on all varieties of standardized tests.

Yet when it comes evaluation time, we seem to want to hold everyone to the same yardstick.

The sooner we start taking the perceptions of our teachers to heart, the better off we will all be. They know how to get the job done. Let's let them.

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