**Should Students Be Able to Show What They Know?**

***January 28, 2016***

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You might have missed Peter Greene’s [article](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-greene/should-students-be-able-t_b_8240030.html) in The Blog by HuffPost Education from October. His ideas are not new, but they are worth dialoguing about. In fact, you probably already spend a lot of your daily mental energy thinking – and conversing – about what Greene calls “one of our largest, most fundamental, and yet most commonly unexamined issues:” Should students be able to show what they know?

Yes. As assessment specialists, we agree with Greene: Students should be able to show what they know. Are we still debating this as an issue?

No. What we are continuously trying to work out is how students should be able to show what they know.

Although we understand that showing and knowing are two fundamentally different things, assessing learning is difficult business.

In a conference [session](http://www.slideshare.net/shareski/if-you-hate-assessment-youre-doing-it-wrong) entitled, “If You Hate Assessment, You’re Doing it Wrong,” Dean Shareski shared:

We are in the business of learning, and yet we have a hard time defining exactly what it is. And that’s not because we’re not bright people. It’s because it’s a really hard question. If you make the answer really simple, I think you’re missing something. It should be a difficult question. It should be a question that we ask ourselves and each other all the time.

Greene writes that “the more we demand that students put on a show to prove to us that they Know Stuff, the more we will design artificial tasks that demand a set of skills and knowledge entirely different from the skills and knowledge we really want to measure.”

Greene’s post was well-timed, just preceding the Obama administration’s [announcement](https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/videos/10153858451374238/) to curb standardized testing in the American school system in October (Donnelly, 2015). The students who were raised by the “No Child Left Behind Act” will be the ones entering our institutions of higher education for the next decade; they have been programmed to “show what they know” in the very specific and typically less authentic assessment method of standardized testing. They will be highly skilled at multiple choice exams.

How can we prepare the next generation of college students to successfully transition to institutions of higher education that are using more real-life authentic learning experiences to “show what students know?”  
Visit more of Greene’s work on [curmudgucation.blogspot.com](http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/)

For Further Reading:

Donnelly, K. (2015). Obama Calls to Curb Standardized Testing in Schools. NBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/obama-calls-curb-standardized-testing-schools-n451741>

Greene, P. (2015 October 4). Should students be able to show what they know? HuffPost Education: The Blog. Retrieved from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-greene/should-students-be-able-t_b_8240030.html>

SunGard (2014). News from FETC: Dean Shareski Shares Four Big Ideas about Assessment. Retrieved from  
<https://sungardk12.com/assessment-dean-shareski-fetc/>

Shareski, D. (2014). If You Hate Assessment, You’re Doing it Wrong [SlideShare]. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/shareski/if-you-hate-assessment-youre-doing-it-wrong>

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