

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

Last week I wrote about civility, or the lack thereof on the election circuit, and what it may be teaching our young people.



schools-nationwide-push-to-measure-students-emotional-skills.html).

Teachers have enough on their plates without being expected to measure such personal skills as courtesy or compassion.

Educators have lost much time being required to “teach to the test.” Are a teacher’s years of education well spent being expected to teach social-emotional skills?

The *Times* article referred to a California fifth-grade teacher who rewarded her students based on how long they could go without misbehaving.

The teacher, Jade Cooney, said the practice allows her to use time teaching that otherwise would be spent on dealing with disruptions.

Perhaps a less-disruptive classroom leads to greater academic success and that – better academic skills – is laudable.



A new national education law – the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – may be attempting to legislate civility by requiring one non-academic measure that will be included in school districts’ accountability.

But seeking to measure a non-academic skill may not be the answer.

A few years ago, the buzz phrase in education was social-emotional learning, which was lauded as way to encourage children to be more empathetic while also improving students’ academic prowess.

A recent article in *The New York Times* by Kate Zernike said that “teaching social-emotional skills is often seen as a way to move away from a narrow focus on test scores, and to consider instead the whole child. It may seem contradictory, then, to test for those skills” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/01/us/testing-for-joy-and-grit->



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But again I wonder how the social-emotional learning will be measured.

At the nine California districts that are implementing this practice, social-emotional learning will count for 8 percent of a school’s overall performance score, the *Times* reported.

It’s time that schools and teachers are given the necessary time to educate children and the resources to do so.

If those who pass laws give this some thought, it’s possible to accomplish both by reducing non-academic mandates.

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