

Education in the United States today is obsessed with testing. Even at Lafayette we seem to be testing a lot (see Tuesday Bulletin archives for April 23). Having the right 'score' determines school ratings, teacher bonuses and staff raises in many school systems. DCPS is one of them. Teachers and principals spend hours disaggregating data looking for skills that may not have been mastered. The new buzz words right now are "targeted assistance." Look at the test results and reteach specific skills. We are actually almost done testing for the year. But this week I got to look at some drawings in Pre-K that demonstrate another way to assess children using authentic student work: student self-portraits.

In 1926, Dr. Florence Goodenough published *Measurement of Intelligence by Drawings*. She had spent a number of years looking at student drawings and discovered that all over the world as children develop there is a very specific sequence of how they draw people related to their ages. She developed a Draw-a-Man test that is still used by psychologists in assessing children. At the beginning of the school year PK students drew a picture of themselves. Last week they drew new pictures of themselves. Without even getting out the scoring guide, and we don't since we don't score these drawings, the differences are astounding. In the fall, mostly large heads with arms and legs sticking out from the sides. Big eyes. No articles of clothing. If there was a body, there were no shoulders or necks. Absolutely appropriate for a 4 year old child. Now we have hair and eyelashes. Shirts and pants. Some fingers and feet. Even a winking eye was present in one child's drawing. Every single picture is proof that our youngest students have learned a lot this year.

Laurie McLaughlin also has older children draw self-portraits. Third graders use a grid and take measurements of their face parts and they transfer the information to their drawings. My mouth is about 2 inches wide. My nose is 3 inches long and so forth. Portraits have been a theme in much of the artwork at Lafayette this year. Our teachers took a course on 'Reading Portraits' from Kennedy Center arts educators and have been using that information and teaching strategies in reading and social studies. Second graders made portraits of the heroes they researched while the 4th grade made portraits of themselves in colonial garb. Each grade level continues to add more details and accuracy to the drawings as they developmentally should.

So while bubbling in circles seems to be the current assessment tool of choice by the educational establishment, at Lafayette we know there are many other ways to measure our children's growth. Black and white composition books are filled with writings this year produced by your children. In kindergarten the first pages are filled with drawings and teacher recorded dictations. Now the children are writing their own entries using the sounds and corresponding letters they have learned this year. Today the 5th grade had their yearly science fair where their projects were on display. Their first real attempt at long term research. Tomorrow and Thursday the 3rd grade takes over the cafeteria with the DC Theater Café and its theme, The War of 1812. All activities that show how teachers and students integrate the skills they have learned this year. Actually bubbling may be on the way out. We hear that the new tests will need to be taken on computers. I can hardly wait to see 2nd and 3rd graders complete their constructed responses on a computer. Even with a lot of practice, keyboarding while composing is a pretty challenging task. I wonder if test developers actually spend any time with real children. But we do and we know there are so many other interesting ways to see what students at Lafayette have learned. Draw-a-Man pictures are one of my favorites. If you want more information you can just

Google Draw-a-Man test and you will find a number of sites with more information along with scoring guides. With fabulous art teachers like Ms. Perll and Ms. McLaughlin I expect Lafayette children would score at the top of the chart!