

## FROM THE DESK OF DARV WINICK

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### *Replacement is Not the Answer*

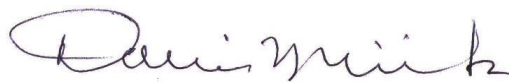
One of the less heralded successes of the accountability movement in public education is the elimination of the replacement theory in measuring and reporting student performance. Some of us can remember when the champion marching band and winning football team were publically touted as school successes and poor academic achievement was hidden from the public and rarely discussed. The required public reporting of academic achievement results featured in the No Child Left Behind legislation has caused a real and appropriate change.

Of course, the case for including non-academic activities in the public school program is still strong and pleasing to the public. Providing activities that students enjoy and do well is an understandable goal. After all, students who do well tend to show up and participate and it is difficult to educate no-shows. A strong case is made by many educators, often joined by parents and community members, that such things as band, athletics and theater are important parts of public schooling. Students may drop out if offerings of "enjoyable" activities are restricted, the argument goes. Many schools adjust academic schedules to accommodate "extra-curricular" activities. Communities are encouraged to honor the winning team and champion marching band.

A pre-accountability movement problem existed, however, when non-academic successes were presented as adequate replacements for success in reading, writing, mathematics, science or social studies. Required public reporting of academic performance has mostly eliminated this problem. Now it is not uncommon to see the billboard at the city limits state "home of an exemplary rated high school" in place of "home of a winning football team".

The important question is not about the value of non-academic activities or the positive public relations results of providing community entertainment. The important question is about the suggestion that an either/or choice exists. Either academics or extracurricular is an inappropriate question for a public school system that is funded to provide academics. One does not replace the other.

Regardless of extra-curricular successes, a school system is a failure to the extent it graduates football players who cannot functionally read, write or handle arithmetic or clarinet players who skipped American history because it conflicted with band practice.



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