

# DOUGLAS B. REEVES, BEHIND THE NUMBERS

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### Behind the Numbers

*If school officials remain fixated on test scores as the ultimate measure of accountability, they will miss the big picture of what schools can accomplish*

**W**hen we say that a school or district is successful, exactly what do we mean?

Two respected critics of contemporary educational policies—Diane Ravitch and Alfie Kohn—suggest that measuring success only by gains in test scores leaves us at risk of many unin-

and the penalties to be avoided by state sanctions are focused exclusively on test scores rather than on broader measures of success? Critics are right about the need to broaden the definitions of educational success. However, boards need practical alternatives that preserve essential principles of

boards to reject test-based accountability and embrace comprehensive accountability. Board members can say, “Mr. President, we recognize the value you place on reading and math tests and we respect that—but let us tell you about the other 90 percent of the things we are doing.”

For example, *ASBJ* and the National School Boards Association presented the Magna Award to Indiana’s Wayne Township School Board for an accountability system that included traditional scores as well as indicators for every central office department—finance, transportation, human resources, recreation services, and oth-

#### For further information:

<http://www.leadandlearn.com/sites/default/files/articles/behind-the-numbers-july-2011.pdf>