

Opinion: Demand better tests, not fewer schools

By Michael R. Bloomberg

President Obama is in danger of squandering one of his most important legacies – better public education policies – and doing real harm to our poorest students and America's future.

Last month, the president and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called for limiting the amount of time that students spend taking tests. It's an unfortunate and tragically oversimplified response to the challenges facing our schools – challenges made plain by U.S. test results released recently, which show that students have lost ground in math for the first time since 1990.

To improve education, parents and teachers need to know how well our students – of all ethnic and racial backgrounds – are learning. That's especially true in communities where schools are the best hope for escaping poverty. Parents deserve to know how schools compare with one another so that they can demand improvements where they are needed and hold schools accountable for delivering results. The same is true for principals and elected officials, to say nothing of taxpayers. That's why accurate information on student learning is so crucial – and like it or not, high-quality testing is an essential element of that.

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