

# Pre-K and K-12

## Defies Measurement: An interview with the filmmaker Q&A with Shannon Puckett, parent and former teacher



**BEFORE MAKING** the film *Defies Measurement*, Shannon Puckett taught at Alameda's Chipman Middle School for five years. The school's story is central to the film's depiction of how high-stakes testing is negatively impacting public schools.

*Defies Measurement* shows what happened when research-based teaching and project-based assessments gave way to pressure from the state to raise test scores. The school eventually closed and a charter school opened in its place. In the film, experts, policymakers, teachers, and parents shed light on the ripple effect of high-stakes testing.

**Q Why and for whom did you produce the film?**

**A** I wanted to respond to the dominant rhetoric about failing schools. When No Child Left Behind started, I



As Berkeley teachers began the Smarter Balanced tests, the union hosted a community showing of the film made by district parent Shannon Puckett (center) to explore the question, "What if the most important lessons learned in school are the ones that cannot be measured?" Puckett is shown with teachers activists John Becker and Dana Blanchard.

was teaching at Chipman, where we were doing amazing things based on brain research... emotional and social learning, hands-on and project-based activities. Kids were excited about learning.

But our test scores were low and the state said we had two years to raise them. We went into survival mode and stopped doing what our students loved about school.

So I wanted parents and people on other side of the political aisle to see the film. But over time, I realized I also want educators to see it.

**Q What lessons did you learn from the experience at Chipman?**

**A** Understanding how children learn, and focusing on the social and emotional aspects of relationships so students feel safe expressing themselves and asking questions... these must be in place for an effective teaching and learning environment.

**Q What were the biggest challenges the Chipman community faced during this time?**

### On the Web

> View the hour-long film *Defies Measurement* at [shineonpro.com](http://shineonpro.com)



**Q How do you respond to Arne Duncan and others who insist our students are not competitive?**

**A** They have misused the data. Scores alone don't measure teacher effectiveness or what kids know. While these guys say U.S. scores are low, our schools with less than 10 percent poverty are number one. Even schools with 25 percent poverty are doing pretty well. The schools with 75 percent poverty rates are the ones not performing.

**Q How have viewers reacted?**

**A** I get amazing feedback from schools with similar stories. It just came out a month ago and has reached more than 12,000 people in 87 countries. It's being used as a tool to fuel the movement to opt out of high-stakes testing.

— Interview by Mindy Pines, CFT Reporter

### RICO TAMAYO COUNCIL PRESIDENT

#### My goal: Support the classroom teacher

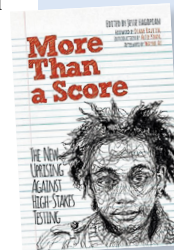
**Growing up in** a household of educators, I was taught to hold my teachers in esteem. I still believe that for the most part, a school's community of stakeholders has respect for the classroom teacher. And yet classroom teachers are under attack.

"Reform" groups such as Students Matter and individuals such as Eli Broad, David Welch, and Michelle Rhee are trying to strip away Education Code provisions that give teachers protection to advocate for their students. Now more than ever we need to fight back against those who would demonize and demoralize classroom teachers.

I've always felt that the motto of the Peace Corps also applies to the classroom: It's the toughest job you'll ever love. My intent as the newly elected president of the EC/TK-12 Council is to support the classroom teacher to get that job done.

#### More Than a Score, *The New Uprising Against High Stakes Testing*

with a foreword by Diane Ravitch, is an inspirational collection about how high-stakes standardized testing is harming public education.



Editor Jesse Hagopian teaches history at Seattle's Garfield High School, where the historic MAP test boycott took place in 2013. He is an associate editor of *Rethinking Schools*,

a founding member of Social Equality Educators, and winner of the 2013 "Secondary School Teacher of Year" award from the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences.