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A life lesson not learned

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While academics and union leaders fall all over themselves praising teacher Kathryn Sihota to the skies for refusing to give a child a standardized test, ordinary folks can hardly be blamed for wondering what Sihota did that was so meritorious. The Vancouver Island teacher is being lauded for nixing the test after she noticed the child was stressed out and teary-eyed over the prospect of taking it.

Paul Shaker, dean of education at Simon Fraser University, told a graduating class of new teachers that Sihota protected the child from "psychological and educational vandalism."

He failed to note that she also thwarted that child's parents' right to accountability regarding their child's progress in reading, and that the real lesson the child learned is that one needn't face up to, and master, any unpleasant task.

That is a life lesson for a future place in the workforce that has gone unlearned.

Also showing herself to be out of touch with reality was Susan Lambert, vice-president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, who said that Sihota's behaviour "exemplifies the best in teaching." Actually, it exemplifies the worst. No test was given, the child's progress went unmeasured, the parents were left in the dark and the child learned that by crying and carrying on, he or she could get the adults to cave.

Shaker referred to test-taking as "educational vandalism," clearly a new application of that phrase which heretofore had probably only been used in the context of spray-painting the school's windows in the middle of the night. He told the graduating teachers that Sihota's act was an "inspiration."

He's right on that score. She's an inspiration -- in how not to behave in the classroom.