



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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A reporter phoned last night to ask what we thought of a message delivered to hundreds of teachers, curriculum specialists and school officials in Florida. It seems that Alfie Kohn, the anti-testing guru, has been flooding unwitting audiences with a plea to boycott high stakes tests, like Florida's FCAT. Never mind that from Florida to California, children are actually gaining achievement since these dastardly tests came on the scene. The facts in education reform are often irrelevant.

In the face of unworthy but nevertheless real attention to the anti-testers this week, it's appropriate to share with you a poem about mediocrity. We first heard it read by Charles Osgood, the journalist. We later got permission to reprint it from CBS radio, and put it in our Monthly Letter to Friends in October, 1998. Now it's here for you to ponder.

There once was a pretty good student,  
Who sat in a pretty good class  
And was taught by a pretty good teacher,  
Who always let pretty good pass,  
He wasn't a whiz-bang at math,  
But for him, education was leading  
Straight down a pretty good path.

He didn't find school too exciting,  
But he wanted to do pretty well,  
And he did have some trouble with writing,  
And nobody had taught him to spell.  
When doing arithmetic problems,  
Pretty good was regarded as fine.  
Five plus 5 needn't always add up to be 10,  
A pretty good answer was 9.  
The pretty good class that he sat in  
Was part of a pretty good school.  
And the student was not an exception,  
On the contrary, he was the rule.  
The pretty good school that he went to  
Was there in a pretty good town.  
And nobody there seemed to notice  
He could not tell a verb from a noun.

The pretty good student in fact was  
Part of a pretty good mob.  
And the first time he knew what he lacked was  
When he looked for a pretty good job.  
It was then, when he sought a position,  
He discovered that life could be tough.  
And he soon had a sneaky suspicion  
Pretty good might not be good enough.  
The pretty good town in our story  
Was part of a pretty good state,  
Which had pretty good aspirations,  
And prayed for a pretty good fate.  
There once was a pretty good nation,  
Pretty proud of the greatness it had,  
Which learned much too late,  
If you want to be great,  
Pretty good is, in fact, pretty bad.

PS – The Monthly Letter to Friends is another tool CER uses to communicate with its friends and interested citizens. If you would like to receive future Monthly Letters, [check it all out here](#).

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The Center for Education Reform  
910 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 1120 • Washington, DC 20006  
800-521-2118 • 301-986-8088 • Fax: 301-986-1826

[www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com) • [cer@edreform.com](mailto:cer@edreform.com)

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